Reimagining the Vernacular Story: Textual Roles, Didacticism, and Entertainment in *Erpai*

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ABSTRACT

Reimagining the Vernacular Story: Textual Roles, Didacticism, and Entertainment in *Erpai*

This thesis studies the late Ming vernacular short story collections *Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement) and *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement Volume Two), together known as *Erpai* 二拍 (Two Slaps). They were written by Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644), who was heavily inspired by Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) genre-defining *Sanyan* 三言 (Three Words) collections. Through close textual analysis, this thesis argues that the overriding focus on the "functional effect" (entertainment and didacticism) of the stories represents a reimagining of the genre given shape to by Feng. In place of Feng's concern for the literary respectability and perceived popular origins of the texts, Ling focuses on the entertaining and didactic effects of the stories on their audience. This reimagining is primarily manifested in Ling's manipulation of the three textual roles of writer, commentator, and storyteller to privilege the functional effect of the collections. The textual analysis is focused on these three roles.

Chapter One introduces the historical context, Ling Mengchu's life, the genre of *huaben* fiction, the *Erpai* collections, the way Ling conceived fiction. The literature review rounds off this chapter. Chapter Two examines the question of the intended audience of the collections. Chapter Three examines the use of textual roles in prioritising the didacticism of the collections, making use of the communicative theoretical framework of ventriloquism. Chapter Four examines the use of textual roles in prioritising the entertainment value of the collections. Chapter Five compares the use of textual roles in *Sanyan* with that in *Erpai*, demonstrating the differences in approach between the works. Finally, the Afterword considers the implications and influences of Ling's reimagining of the vernacular story.

General notes:

All translations and the mistakes in them are my own unless otherwise noted.

Within quotations, marginal commentary is enclosed in curly brackets {} in English, and square brackets 【】 in Chinese. Interlineal commentary is enclosed in triangular brackets <> in both English and Chinese. The marginal comments were, of course, originally placed in the margin, though here they are placed in line with the main text for ease of reading. The placement of the comments follows that found in the *Ling Mengchu quanji* 凌濛初全集 editions for *Erpai*, and the 1991 Jiangsu guji chubanshe (*Zhongguo huaben daxi* 中國話本大系) editions for *Sanyan*.

Where a quotation from a story contains a verse passage, this is set in italics in English and indented relative to the main text. In Chinese, it is indented relative to the main text.

Punctuation in the Chinese text follows that found in the *Ling Mengchu quanji* editions.

Chinese characters are given in citations only on the first time an author or work is cited, with *pinyin* being used in all subsequent citations.

Abbreviations used in footnotes

EKPAJQ: *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement Volume Two) (*Ling Mengchu quanji* edition)

GJXS: *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Stories Old and New) (1991 Jiangsu guji chubanshe edition (*Zhongguo huaben daxi* 中國話本大系))

JSTY: *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Comprehensive Words to Caution the World) (1991 Jiangsu guji chubanshe edition (*Zhongguo huaben daxi* 中國話本大系))

LMCQJ: *Ling Mengchu quanji* 凌濛初全集

PAJQ: Pai'an jingqi 拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement) (*Ling Mengchu quanji* edition)

SYLPZL: Sanyan-Liangpai ziliao 《三言、兩拍》資料 (Materials on *Sanyan-Liangpai*)

XSHY: *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 (Immortal Words to Wake the World) (1991 Jiangsu guji chubanshe edition (*Zhongguo huaben daxi* 中國話本大系))

Citations from other editions are not abbreviated.

Abbreviations used for individual stories

Stories from *Pai'an jingqi*, *Erke pai'an jingqi*, *Gujin xiaoshuo*, *Jingshi tongyan*, and *Xingshi hengyan* are generally referred to using an abbreviation and a number. "I" refers to *Pai'an jingqi*, "II" refers to *Erke pai'an jingqi*, "GJ" refers to *Gujin xiaoshuo*, "TY" refers to *Jingshi tongyan*, and "HY" refers to *Xingshi hengyan*. The number refers to the order of the story within the collection, so I-10 refers to the tenth story in *Pai'an jingqi*.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Ming dynasty short story collections *Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement) and *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement Volume Two), together known as *Erpai* 二拍 (Two Slaps), were written by Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644) and published in 1628 and 1632 respectively. The stories constitute the second major body of work in the genre of vernacular short story often known as *huaben* 話本[1] fiction after Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) *Sanyan* 三言 (Three Words) collections. The original contribution of this thesis is to argue that they represent a reimagining of the genre given shape to by Feng. This reimagining hinges on the prioritization of "functional effect", specifically entertainment and didacticism, to a position of overriding importance. In place of Feng's concern for the literary respectability and perceived popular origins of the texts, Ling focuses on the entertaining and didactic effects of the stories on their audience. This privileging of functional effect is achieved through the use of the three "textual roles" afforded to the author by the features of the *huaben*.

The notion of the "textual role" was adopted in this thesis to highlight the fact that Ling performs three distinct roles in these texts: a writer, deciding on the events of the story, a simulated storyteller, narrating the story, and a commentator, remarking on

[1] See section "*Huaben* fiction" in this chapter, p.44, for more detail.

the story. These three roles all vary in distance from the events of the plot, and each enable Ling to enhance the functional effect of the stories by making them more entertaining and didactic in different ways. Though these three roles may be found to differing extents in a range of fictional genres, the distinction between the roles is particularly sharp in *huaben* fiction thanks to the use of clearly defined personas to narrate and comment on the stories. In *huaben* fiction, the task of narration is performed by a conspicuous "storyteller" persona, who mimics the patter of professional marketplace storytellers and possesses a discernible character of his own. The role of commenting on the story, meanwhile, is played by a "commentator" persona, kept distinct from the "storyteller" persona both linguistically, through his use of the literary language, and spatially, through the positioning of the comments on the margins, outside the printed "box" in which the main text was set. Both personas are distinct from each other and also distinct from the role of the writer. The textual role of the writer differs from the previous two in that it is not represented in the text via a separate persona; rather, the writer's presence in the text itself is repressed, though the agency of the writer in creating the text is asserted explicitly in the preface and other paratexts.

Reading the stories with reference to these textual roles highlights the privileging of the "functional effect" of the collections that marks Ling's reimagination of the

vernacular short story. The term "functional effect" as used in this thesis refers to the text's effectiveness in both entertaining its audience and expressing a persuasive didactic message. This term was employed for its ability to cover both entertainment and didacticism, and for the focus it places on these specific, tangible, down-to-earth, practical purposes of the stories. As will be demonstrated,[2] this focus reflects Ling Mengchu's pragmatic, "this-worldly" view of fiction as a genre firmly rooted in its interactions with its readers, and characterised by the effect it has on its audience. For Ling, a focus on functional effect, in the form of entertainment and didacticism, was a fundamental defining feature of the vernacular story: its "original colour" (*bense* 本色).

In the first chapter, context and foundation will be provided for the rest of the study. This chapter will provide a brief historical background before examining Ling's activities as an official, publisher, and writer, his leisure activities, and the people he mixed with. Following this, the term "*huaben*" as used in this thesis will be explored and defined. Next, an overview of the collections will be given, including an exploration of Ling's creative role in them. Ling's critical views on fiction and drama will then be analysed and compared, revealing that he regarded didacticism and

[2] See p.76 for more detail on Ling's conceptions of fiction and drama.

entertainment as defining features of *huaben* fiction. Finally, existing research into *Erpai* will be examined and this thesis and its contribution placed into context.

The second chapter sets out to answer the question of the readership of *Erpai*. As Ling's reimagination of the vernacular short story is centred around the functional effect of the stories on their readers, it is important to establish a clear hypothesis as to who Ling intended his readers to be. The chapter first explores existing scholarship on the subject, before going on to approach the question of readership from multiple angles: the quality (and therefore relative cost) of the surviving editions of *Erpai*; the use of Classical allusions and regional dialect and the effect this has on the level of education necessary to read the work; and the presence of didactic pronouncements directed at specific demographics, which hint at who Ling envisaged reading his stories.

Chapter Three approaches the question of how Ling uses his three textual roles to privilege the didactic content of the stories and make their didacticism more effective. First, the definition of the term "didacticism" is refined into two subcategories, "moral didacticism" and "political discursion", before the analysis is contextualised by reference to the pre-existing tradition of didacticism in Chinese literature. The chapter continues to evaluate critical views from modern scholars on the significance

of didacticism in Ming vernacular fiction, both novels and short stories. Next, the theoretical framework of ventriloquism, used for exploring how the textual roles of commentator and storyteller work to enhance the didactic function of the stories, is introduced. Following this, examples from the texts are analysed to demonstrate the ways in which each of Ling's three textual roles are used to enhance the moral didacticism and political discursion of the stories. Finally, examples of passages in which didactic elements also contribute to the entertainment value of the stories are identified and analysed.

Chapter Four is broadly structured in parallel to Chapter Three, and explores how Ling uses his textual roles to privilege and enhance the entertainment function of the stories. Firstly, the meaning of the term "entertainment" as it applies to literature in pre-modern China is explored and compared with modern academic definitions of the term in order to arrive at a definition suitable for this thesis. Then, context for the analysis is provided by reference to the pre-existing tradition of entertainment in Chinese fiction. The chapter continues to examine modern scholarship on entertainment in Chinese fiction. Next, examples from the text are analysed in order to demonstrate the ways in which each of Ling's three textual roles are used to enhance the entertainment value of the stories. Finally, examples of entertaining features which also enhance didactic effect are identified and analysed.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, examines the question of how Ling's use of his three textual roles to privilege the entertainment and didactic function of his stories represents a reimagining of the vernacular story as defined by Feng Menglong. The genre-defining works of the vernacular story are Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* collections, *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Stories Old and New), *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Comprehensive Words to Caution the World), and *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 (Immortal Words to Wake the World). These were published shortly before *Erpai* and had a strong influence on Ling's collections. Therefore, in order to identify and highlight Ling's contribution to the genre, the use of textual roles in *Sanyan* for entertainment value and didactic effect is compared to their use in *Erpai*, as analysed in Chapters Three and Four.

Finally, the Afterword briefly assesses the implications of *Erpai*'s reimagination of the genre, through comparison with the *Sanyan* collections, and suggests some of the possible influences of this reimagination, through an overview of the numerous short story collections that followed *Erpai* in the late Ming/early Qing period.

Historical background

Ling Mengchu lived through the gradual decline of the Ming dynasty, and he died a few months before its final fall. Though the 16th century had seen a period of rapid population growth and urbanization in China, by the end of the century population numbers started to stagnate.[3] This demographic trend mirrored the political stasis that worsened throughout the Wanli 萬曆 (1573-1620) emperor's reign, with the emperor refusing to take an active role in ruling the country. Luo Yuren 雒于仁 (*jinshi* of 1583) reprimanded the emperor in 1590 for his indulgence in the four vices of wine, lust, riches, and anger, with some justification.[4] Factional infighting between the Confucian Donglin Academy 東林書院, their opponents, and court eunuchs resulted in a steady stream of intrigues that impaired the empire's ability to withstand the military threats posed by the Manchus outside their borders and peasant rebellions within. In 1598, Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536-1618) submitted a prescient memorial, in which he warned:

> Now, the oversights in national defence are evident. There are three major encampments of soldiers to protect the capital; half the horses are exhausted and half the men are old and weak. There are soldiers on the nine borders for defence against foreign invaders; they are all brave when it comes to coercing their superiors and timid when it comes to facing battle.

[3] Atwell, "The T'ai-ch'ang, T'ien-ch'i, and Ch'ung-chen reigns, 1620–1644", *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7*, p.586.
[4] Fan Shuzhi 樊樹志, *Wan Ming shi (1573-1644 nian)* 晚明史 (1573-1644 年) v.1, p.485.

> 今國家之防禦疎略可知矣。三大營之兵以衛京師也，乃馬半羸敝，人半老弱。九邊之兵以禦外寇也，皆勇於挟上，怯於臨戎。[5]

Unsurprisingly, 20 years on the dynasty's position worsened dramatically. The Taichang 泰昌 (1620-1621) emperor acceded to the throne after the Wanli emperor's death, but he died in mysterious circumstances after only a few months in power.[6] The Tianqi 天啟 (1621-1627) emperor who succeeded him was weak, and more interested in carpentry than leading the empire.[7] Meanwhile, the Manchus were defeating the Ming in Liaoning and threatening Beijing, where martial law was declared in May 1621.[8]

In the years leading up to the Tianqi emperor's death in 1627, when Ling's first collection was published, the dynasty was under severe pressure from a string of fires, earthquakes, and floods that "provoked a series of peasant uprisings, urban disorders, bandit and pirate raids, and mutinies among government troops".[9] Ling Mengchu would eventually meet his end in one of these peasant uprisings. In addition, the

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[5] Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, *Ming shi* 明史 j.226, p.5938.
[6] Miller, *State Versus Gentry in Late Ming Dynasty China, 1572-1644*, p.119.
[7] Atwell, "The T'ai-ch'ang, T'ien-ch'i, and Ch'ung-chen reigns, 1620–1644", *The Cambridge History of China Volume 7,* p.595.
[8] Ibid., p.600.
[9] Ibid., p.604.

Manchu conquest of Korea, a Chinese ally, enabled them to focus all their attention on attacking China. Internally, political power struggles continued with the rise of the eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568-1627), who attempted to set up a personality cult by packing the bureaucracy with his followers and setting up shrines to himself across the country.[10] Though Wei Zhongxian was deposed after the Chongzhen 崇禎 (1627-1644) emperor ascended the throne, factional infighting and dynastic decline continued. By the time Ling published his second collection in 1632, Manchu forces had ransacked the area surrounding Beijing, and with the rebellion in Shaanxi remaining unquelled, the dynasty's fall was just a matter of time.

The political decline of the dynasty was rationalised as the result of a failure in traditional Confucian morality not only by early Qing scholars such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), who bemoaned Buddhist and Daoist influences in late Ming examination essays,[11] but also by many officials at the time, especially those associated with the Donglin Academy.[12] Ling Mengchu appears to have had some sympathy with this analysis, as revealed in his preface to *Pai'an jingqi*: he complains

[10] Dardess, *Blood and History in China: The Donglin Faction and Its Repression, 1620-1627*, pp.141-143.
[11] Kang-i-Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, Volume 2,* p.159.
[12] Ebrey et. al. ed., *Pre-Modern East Asia: To 1800: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*, p.238.

that due to a long period of peace (that preceding the upheavals of the early 17th century) "the people are lost and their will decadent" 民佚志淫.[13]

The consequences of the 16th century economic boom, spurred by trade with Japan and the Spanish Philippines, also caused concern for the literati. The boom "stimulated expansion of the school system and thus increased the number of examination candidates competing for degrees" while creating a "fluid and flexible class system, largely free of effective legal barriers to status mobility".[14] This meant that advancement through the examination system was harder than in the past: the number of candidates rose many times faster than the number of official positions available. Ling was a victim to this phenomenon, as were some of his ancestors.

Another consequence of this economic growth, unevenly concentrated in more advanced regions such as Jiangnan 江南, is that it brought "inflation, uncontrolled urban growth, and business speculation",[15] which in turn widened the gap between rich and poor and increased social tension.[16] Literati lined up to criticise this phenomenon: Qiu Shun 丘橓 (1516-1585) lamented that "Now, both the state and the

[13] Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, "Xu" 序, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.
[14] Rawski, "Economic and Social Foundations of Late Imperial Culture", p.8-9.
[15] Atwell, "The T'ai-ch'ang, T'ien-ch'i, and Ch'ung-chen reigns, 1620–1644", *The Cambridge History of China Volume* 7, p.588.
[16] Ibid.

people are poor, and officials alone are rich" 今國與民俱貧而官獨富.[17] Another, Zhang Tao 張濤 (*jinshi* of 1586), fulminated that

> those who became wealthy through the "branch end" [trading] are in the majority, and those who became wealthy through the "root" [farming] are few and far between. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. Those who are in the ascendancy are uniquely brazen; those who fall behind cower away.
>
> 末富者居多，本富盡少。富者愈富，貧者愈貧。起者獨雄，落者辟易.[18]

Zhang's use of the terms *ben* 本 (root) and *mo* 末 (branch end) reflect a sense that the natural order of the world had been inverted, with merchants now in the ascendant. The phenomenon would have been particularly noticeable where Zhang was stationed in She county 歙縣, part of the renowned trading area of Huizhou 徽州. As Ling Mengchu writes,

> However, the custom in Huizhou is for trading to be the most prestigious occupation, with the examinations actually regarded as secondary…the people of Huizhou are exclusively focused

[17] Zhang Tingyu, *Ming shi* j.226, p.5936.
[18] Zhang Tao 張濤, *She zhi (Wanli)* 歙志 (萬曆) j.5 p.11b, in *Shanghai tushuguan cang xijian fangzhi congkan* 上海圖書館藏稀見方志叢刊 v.123, p.366.

on those who trade. Therefore, whenever a merchant returns home, the amount of respect that everyone- from distant relations such as fellow clan members and friends to close relations such as wives, concubines, and family- affords you is based solely on the profit you bring back. {Enough to show that this is a vile custom}.

卻是徽州風俗，以商賈為第一等生業，科第反在次看……徽人是專重那做商的，所以凡是商人歸家，外而宗族朋友，內而妻妾家屬，只看你所得歸來的利息多少為輕重。【足見惡俗】[19]

The figure of the Huizhou merchant reappears at intervals throughout the stories; while the portrayal of merchants in *Erpai* is relatively positive compared with other contemporary fiction, Ling's marginal commentary betrays a deep sense of unease at changing value systems, reflecting a perceived threat to the position of the literati.

This threat originated in the changing social structure of the period. The increased wealth of merchants, especially in Jiangnan, combined with the continued prestige and power attached to examination success to bring about a "merging of literati and merchant social strategies and interests":[20] while sons of merchant families purchased official titles or won them through the examination system, literati families amassed

[19] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.609.
[20] Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, p.376.

wealth to hedge against a future in which an official position was no longer guaranteed. These trends are also reflected in *Erpai*, depicted in marriages between merchant and scholar families,[21] and people switching from one occupation to the other.[22] The hierarchy of society at the time was complex: David Johnson proposes dividing late-Imperial society into nine sectors based on levels of education on one axis and levels of dominance on the other, from the Classically educated and legally privileged gentry at one extreme to the illiterate, dependent peasantry at the other.[23]

Ling Mengchu

Ling Mengchu came from a distinguished family near the top of these nine classes. He was born in the early reign of the Wanli Emperor into a distinguished family living in Wucheng County 烏程縣, near the shores of Taihu 太湖 in Zhejiang province. The "scent of books" hung heavily around the family, who could boast an impressive array of literary and political achievements spanning several generations, even as they struggled to achieve true prominence. The main available biographical sources are epitaphs and other documents from the Ling clan history that have an

[21] For example, the marriage between poor scholar Han Shiyu 韓師愈 and the daughter of the wealthy Merchant Jin 金朝奉 in I-10. Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.145.

[22] In I-2, Yao Dizhu's 姚滴珠 husband Pan Jia 潘甲 abandoned his studies to pursue commerce. Meanwhile, in I-22 , merchant Guo the Seventh 郭七郎 purchases an official title with his fortune. Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.25; p.345.

[23] Johnson, "Communication, Class, and Consciousness", p.56.

interest in praising their subject, and so present an incomplete picture at best. In addition, there are also short biographies of the family in the regional histories of Huzhou 湖州, Wucheng, and Shengshe 晟舍. The limited primary sources available meant that the existing secondary scholarship on Ling Mengchu's life is all heavily based on the same sources, differing primarily in the degree of detail.[24]

Ling Mengchu's *zi* was Yuanfang 元房, and his *hao* was Chucheng 初成. He also answered to Xuanfang 玄房 (a *zi* he used in his younger days), alternative *ming* Bo 波, alternative *zi* Xiahan 遐斥 or Bihan 彼斥, and alternative *hao* Jikongguan zhuren 即空觀主人. Feng Baoshan 馮保善 has proven that an alternative *zi*, Bohan 波斥, given by Ye Dejun 叶德均 in his 1947 article "Ling Mengchu shiji xinian" 凌濛初事蹟系年 (A chronology of Ling Mengchu's life) is not correct, arising from a misremembered reference;[25] Zhao Hongjuan has since argued that Feng's proposal "Xiahan" should be "Bihan".[26]

His alternative *hao* Jikongguan zhuren, or "Master of the Temple of the Void", reflects the diversity of his beliefs and philosophical outlook. Ling used this name only on works of drama and fiction; his other works were signed more simply, as

[24] See p.89 for an overview of biographical studies of Ling Mengchu.
[25] Feng Baoshan 馮保善, "Ling Mengchu shishi si kao" 凌濛初史實四考, p.110.
[26] Zhao Hongjuan 趙紅娟, "Ling Mengchu shengping yu jiaoyou wu ti" 凌濛初生平與交遊五題, p.49-50.

"The Young Scholar from Wuxing, Ling Mengchu" 吳興後學凌濛初. The name likely originates from his friend Feng Mengzhen 馮夢楨 (1546-1605), who on occasion styled himself Zhenshi jushi 真實居士, or "Hermit of Reality": in the collection *Dongpo chanxi ji* 東坡禪喜集 (A Collection of Su Dongpo's Joys in Zen), Ling signs himself Jikong jushi 即空居士, or "Hermit of the Void", in parallel.[27] The collection was given commentary when Ling and Feng Mengzhen met in 1603, but not published until after Feng's death, in 1621, meaning that is difficult to establish whether Jikong jushi was the style name Ling used in 1603, or if he modified his existing style name in order to create a parallel when the book was printed. If the former hypothesis is correct, it illustrates a shift in Ling's thinking towards a more syncretic philosophy as he aged: as Lenny Hu has suggested, the combination of the Buddhist term "*jikong*" 即空, referring to the relationship between "void" and "being", and the character "*guan*" 觀, meaning Daoist temple, "reveals Ling's ideological ambivalence about being a faithful follower of one single dogma".[28] His style name also reflects Ling's affinity with Wei-Jin 魏晋 Daoist escapist literati, who "concealed themselves in mountain retreats…for seeking peace of mind after they had failed the examinations",[29] and combined life as a hermit with "the consolation of

[27] Ling Mengchu ed., *Dongpo chanxi ji* 東坡禪喜集, *LMCQJ* v.8, p.1.
[28] Hu, Lenny, "Introduction", *In the Inner Quarters: Erotic Stories from Ling Mengchu's Two Slaps*, p.20.
[29] Ibid.

good wine and beautiful women".[30] As we will see, this analysis is borne out by the details of Ling's life.

Official Career

Ling Mengchu's first ambition was to climb the ladder of the Imperial examinations. He showed early promise: at twenty, he sent a letter to high-ranking Hanlin Academy official and former third-placed *tanhua* 探花 graduate Liu Yingqiu 劉應秋 (1547-1620), who was very impressed, and "for a time, none of the high ranking officials did not know of Ling the Nineteenth" 一時公卿無不識有凌十九者.[31] However, he was unable to translate this early promise into examination success. Ling repeatedly failed the examinations to become a *juren*, with either four or five unsuccessful attempts depending on the source.[32] Something of the predicament this placed him in is evident in his character Li Jun's 李君 lament in story I-40, and Ling's commentary on it.

> {A hero who has lost his way; I have the same feeling in a different age} With tears filling his eyes, he said 'As soon as you give up [taking the exams], you spend the rest of your life as a

[30] Ibid.
[31] Zheng Longcai 鄭龍采, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming" 別駕初成公墓誌銘, in *Ling shi zongpu xuanlu* 凌氏宗譜選錄, *LMCQJ* v.10, p.196.
[32] Zhao Hongjuan, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming jiaobu" 別駕初成公墓誌銘校補, p.84.

failed *juren*. Even if you were to be lucky and get a prominent official position, it would always ring hollow'. <In this time, one cannot hope even for this>

【失路英雄，異世同感】含著一眶眼淚道「一歇了手，終身是個不第舉子，就僥倖官職高貴，也說不響了。」<今世並此不可望>[33]

Ling did at one point write about giving up on the examinations and becoming a hermit.[34] Though he would not follow through with this plan, he never did pass the examinations. He won an official position in Shanghai, then a minor fishing village, towards the end of his life. Here he fought off pirates along the coast and came up with a method of counting salt cakes that significantly reduced corruption and theft.[35] He served competently enough to win promotion to the larger city of Xuzhou 徐州, his epitaph writer Zheng Longcai 鄭龍采 (*juren* of 1621) describing his departure using a stereotyped image of weeping crowds "lying across the track and grabbing onto his carriage" 卧轍攀轅 in an attempt to stop him leaving.[36]

[33] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ*, p.646. Marginal commentary is in curly brackets {} in English, square brackets 【】in Chinese; interlineal commentary is in triangular brackets < > in English and Chinese.
[34] Zheng Longcai, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming", in *Ling shi zongpu xuanlu*, *LMCQJ* v.10, p.196.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p.197.

By this time, the Ming Empire was under threat from a succession of peasant rebellions, and Xuzhou was soon under attack from an uprising led by a Chen Xiaoyi 陳小一 (identified as Cheng Jikong 程繼孔 (no dates)).[37] The rebels had Imperial forces on the back foot, and Ling presented the general He Tengjiao 何騰蛟 (1592-1649) with *Jiao kou shi ce* 剿寇十策 (Ten Strategies for Exterminating the Bandits).[38] Though some of these were hardly revelatory (i.e. "occupy strategic locations" 據形勝), the general was impressed, reportedly saying "Truly, by following your strategies, even the hardened rebels in Gansu and Sichuan may be crushed with ease, let alone these clowns in Xuzhou!" 誠如君策，雖隴蜀積寇不難蕩平，奚有徐方之小醜哉.[39] Sure enough, the Imperial forces won the day. Ling then went to Chen Xiaoyi's camp at great personal risk to persuade him to surrender.[40]

Though this rebellion was successfully put down, another one soon followed. Ling trained militias, but they scattered before the rebels and Ling was besieged in Fangcun 房村 while working on dykes there. What Zheng Longcai's description of the ensuing siege lacks in reliability, it makes up in drama and colour. On being asked

[37] Jia Sanqiang 賈三強, "Ling Mengchu wannian ershi kao" 凌濛初晚年二事考, p.95.
[38] Zheng Longcai, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming", in *Ling shi zongpu xuanlu*, *LMCQJ* v.10, p.197.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p.198.

to surrender, Ling is said to have climbed a tower, retorting "What sort of person do you take me for? I am no rat, desperate to cling onto life!" 誠目我為何如人，我豈鼠輩偷生者比耶, and shooting several rebels with a hunting gun.[41] As the siege wore on, he refused food and drink, and made a pact with the rebel leader not to harm any civilians in the city. He died the next day, coughing up "pints of blood" 嘔血數升 and crying out "Do not harm my people!" 勿傷吾百姓者.[42] Allegedly, dozens were so distraught by his death that they killed themselves as well. Ling's care of the people under his charge continued after his death- when the rebels found his body it had the colour of a living person, and the local people believed that Fangcun was spared the fires that consumed other villages in the area thanks to Ling's spirit bringing timely rain.[43]

The appearance of Ling's beneficent spirit, a supernatural twist that he may not have wholly approved of, is not the only reason to doubt the literal truth of the account. Zheng was not present at the siege, and though he claims to have discussed Ling with He Tengjiao, he wrote it long after the fact at the request of one of Ling's family

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p.199.
[43] Ibid.

members.[44] There is debate around even the most basic facts, such as the time of Ling's death and the rebellion he died in.[45]

In addition to the doubts over its reliability, the epitaph gives a one-dimensional picture of Ling, concentrating on his minor official career at the expense of his publishing and writing: his life is presented through a purely Confucian lens. Though this is to be expected in this genre of writing, the extent to which Ling's non-official activities are neglected far surpasses that of his ancestor's epitaphs. A list of Ling's works is given, with no comment on the contents, and, unsurprisingly, *Pai'an jingqi* comes last in the list of "secondary achievements" 餘緒,[46] reflecting the lowly status of fiction at the time. Ling's publishing activities, with their commercial connections, are not mentioned at all. The Ling Mengchu presented to posterity through the

[44] Ibid., p.200.

[45] The epitaph claims that Ling died in the first month of the seventeenth year of the Chongzhen reign (1644) in Li Zicheng's 李自成 rebellion. However, based on a comparison with other historical records, Jia Sanqiang suggests that Ling died in a second rebellion led by Cheng Jikong in the fifth month of the seventeenth year of the Chongzhen reign (1644). Xu Yongbin places Ling's death slightly earlier, in the twelfth month of the sixteenth year of the Chongzhen reign (early 1644), agreeing that the rebellion was that of Cheng Jikong. A third possibility, listed in the Qing dynasty *Shengshe zhen zhi (Tongzhi)* 晟舍鎮志(同治) (Records of Shengshe Town (Tongzhi Era)) is that he died in the third month of the seventeenth year of the Chongzhen reign (1644). See Jia Sanqiang, "Ling Mengchu wannian ershi kao", p.98; Xu Yongbin 徐永斌, "Ling Mengchu si shi kao bian" 凌濛初死事考辨, p.108; Min Baoliang 閔寶梁 ed., *Shengshe zhenzhi* (*Tongzhi*) 晟舍鎮志 (同治) j.5, p.23a, in *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* 鄉鎮志專輯 v.24, p.1064.

[46] Zheng Longcai, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming", in *Ling shi zongpu xuanlu*, *LMCQJ* v.10, p.199.

epitaph is a brave and thoroughly virtuous stereotypical Confucian official. However, this was only one part of his life.

Publishing Career

The Ling family were heavily involved in the publishing industry in Huzhou, dominating it along with the Min family 閔氏, another prominent local family with whom they were related through marriage. At around this time, Huzhou imprints were gaining a reputation for quality, with contemporary bibliophile Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551－1602) saying that

> Of the contemporary imprints I have seen, those from Suzhou and Changzhou are the best...Recently, imprints from Huzhou and She County have improved dramatically in quality, and now command a similar price to those from Suzhou and Changzhou.
>
> 余所見當今刻本，蘇、常為上……近湖刻，歙刻驟精，遂與蘇、常爭價。[47]

Huzhou, situated on the shores of Taihu with water links to the major Jiangnan cities, was geographically well situated to succeed in the book trade. Modern scholar Lu Gong 路工 describes the Huzhou "book boats" that facilitated this: "The book

[47] Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 j.4, p.59.

merchants of the Huzhou area would send boat after boat loaded with ancient works to the gate of [famous book collector] Mao Jin in Qixingqiao" 湖州一帶販書商人, 一船一船滿載古籍送到七星橋毛晉的家門口.[48]

The books produced by the Ling and Min families were characterised by a multicolour printing technique known as *taoban* 套版, using different blocks to print a single page.[49] Each block was "registered with water-based ink in different colors to be printed on the paper in succession".[50] This meant that commentary could be printed in red, clearly distinguishing it from the main body of the text in black, and demanded great precision in carving and aligning the blocks. Ling Mengchu was the first member of his family to employ this technique,[51] and other Ling family members refined it to produce books in as many as five colours.[52] In the late Ming, *taoban* printing was virtually monopolised by the Ling and Min families,[53] and their output was prolific: Taiwanese scholar Li Qingzhi 李清志 estimates that the two families

[48] Lu Gong 路工, *Fang shu jianwen lu* 訪書見聞錄, p.478.
[49] Examples of *taoban* editions by Min Zhenye 閔振業 and Ling Xingde 凌性德 can be seen in Zhao Qian 趙前 ed., *Mingdai banke tudian* 明代版刻圖典, p.458 and p.460.
[50] Tsien, Tsuen-hsuin, "Techniques of Woodblock Printing", *Collected Writings on Chinese Culture*, p.135.
[51] Xu Yongbin 徐永斌, Zhang Ying 張瑩, "Ling Mengchu yu wan Ming keshuye" 凌濛初與晚明刻書業, p.215.
[52] Hyōno Kazue 表野和江, Wu Zhenglan 吳正嵐 , trans., "Ming mo Wuxing Ling shi keshu hudong kao: Ling Mengchu he chuban" 明末吳興凌氏刻書活動考－凌濛初和出版, p.62.
[53] Ibid., p.61.

published no fewer than 300 books.[54] The majority of the works published by Ling Mengchu were Classical texts and the poetry and prose of past masters, but he also published some drama, fiction and Buddhist sutras.[55]

The works were popular, undoubtedly due to the ease of reading that multicolour printing enabled. Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639), a contemporary and friend of both Ling Mengchu and the Mins, claims that "Wuxing books with vermilion commentary are published with great frequency, and rich, poor, good, and bad alike salivate as they purchase them" 吳興硃評書錯出, 無問貧富好醜, 垂涎購之.[56] The reference to rich and poor buying the editions is most likely an exaggeration, as they must have been costly. The high cost would have come not only from the technical precision required to print in multiple colours, but also from the use of top-quality *xuanzhi* 宣紙 paper and the addition of fine illustrations.[57]

However, Ling editions were seen as inferior to those produced by the Mins.[58] Xie Zhaozhe described the variable quality of their output:

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[54] Li Qingzhi 李清志, *Gushu banben jianding yanjiu* 古書版本鑑定研究, p.249.
[55] Xu Yongbin, Zhang Ying, "Ling Mengchu yu wan Ming keshuye", p.216.
[56] Chen Jiru 陳繼儒, "*Shiji chao* xu" 史記鈔敘, in *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben xu ba jilu: shi bu* 國立中央圖書館善本序跋集錄·史部 v.1, p.26.
[57] Zhao Hongjuan, "Ling Mengchu ji qi jiazu de keshu jingshang huodong" 凌濛初及其家族的刻書經商活動, p.91.
[58] Xu Yongbin, Zhang Ying, "Ling Mengchu yu wan Ming keshuye", p.221.

> Regarding the carvings of the Ling family of Wuxing, they are anxious to complete their books and make a profit, and are also miserly in hiring people to edit and trace the characters: it is scarcely strange that [similar characters such as] *hai* and *shi* get mixed up!
>
> 吳興凌氏諸刻，急於成書射利，又慳於倩人編摩，其間亥豕相望，何怪其然！[59]

This indicates that the Ling family's publishing was motivated by profit, and that the high quality of some of their editions was an attempt to compete in the marketplace with their neighbours the Mins. There is a high degree of overlap in the titles published by the two families,[60] indicating fierce competition.

Another sign of commercial pressures is the proliferation of books that the Lings re-published with a different title, preface, or afterword.[61] This sleight of hand allowed the publisher to get more use out of the same set of blocks, increasing both profits and reader interest. The use of these nakedly commercial tricks illustrates the degree to which their publishing activities were led by profit. A more above-board method of increasing sales was the use of commentary from famous and well-respected scholars.

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[59] Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淛, *Wu zazu* 五雜俎 j.13, p.21b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 v.1130, p.608.
[60] Xu Yongbin, Zhang Ying, "Ling Mengchu yu wan Ming keshuye", p.221.
[61] Zhao Hongjuan, "Ling Mengchu ji qi jiazu de keshu jingshang huodong", p.93.

This is why Ling Mengchu particularly admired the commentaries of Liu Chenweng 劉辰翁 (1232-1297) of the late Song and made great efforts to seek out his works.[62]

However, commentary is one area in which Ling's love of literature, over and above the profit motive, becomes evident: he added his own commentary to the works of drama that he published, reflecting his own passion for the genre. His interest in fiction also spilled over into other genres, with parts of his *Hou Han shu zuan* 後漢書纂 (An Abridged History of the Later Han) reading more like a historical novel than a history.[63] Ling's personal passion for accuracy is also shown in his introductory remarks to *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 (The Lute), where he bemoans the lack of reliable editions of *Baiyue ting* 拜月亭 (The Pavilion of Praying to the Moon) that he can publish in order to correct the alterations that had crept in over time.[64] The marriage of shrewd commercial nous and genuine literary interest reflects how the competition between the two families was played out within the bounds of a "Confucianised commerce" that retained allegiance to literati ideals.

Writing Career: Poetry and Drama

[62] Hyōno Kazue, "Ming mo Wuxing Ling shi keshu hudong kao: Ling Mengchu he chuban", p.63.
[63] Pan Jianguo 潘建國, "Ming Ling Mengchu chidu zhenji kaoshi" 明凌濛初尺牘真跡考釋, p.136.
[64] Ling Mengchu, "Fanli" 凡例, *Pipa ji* 琵琶記, *LMCQJ* v.4, p.22.

Of course, Ling was a prolific writer alongside his publishing activities.[65] Unfortunately the vast majority of his writings, including all his *shi* poetry, have been lost, though descriptions of some lost works survive. The *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Summary of the Contents of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries) records two anthologies of original *shi* poetry and *zawen* 雜文 prose, *Guomen ji* 國門集 (The Capital City Gate Collection) and *Guomen yiji* 國門乙集 (The Capital City Gate Collection vol. II). The description is not very complimentary, saying only that "As this was a time in which he suffered repeated frustrations in the examinations, there are many works of despondency and boredom" 蓋屢躓場屋之時，故頗多抑鬱無聊之作.[66]

The equivocal summary of his anthologies suggests that *shi* poetry composition was not Ling's strong suit. However, he also produced critical editions of *shi* poetry. He had a particular interest in the *Shi jing* 詩經 (The Classic of Poetry): in addition to publishing the *Shi jing* itself, three of his surviving works are based on it.[67] However, his *Shi* poetry criticism was scarcely better received than his *shi* poems, at least by Qing scholars. Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629- 1709) says, rather cruelly, that he could not

[65] This section concentrates on works that either survive or for which a description exists. See Appendix I for a complete list of Ling's works.

[66] Ji Yun 紀昀 ed., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 j.180, p.4880.

[67] These are *Shengmen zhuan Shi di zhong* 聖門傳詩嫡冢 (Annotations on the *Shi* From Direct Sons of the Gate of the Sage), *Yan Shi yi* 言詩翼 (On the Wings of the *Shi*), and *Shi ni* 詩逆 (Tracing the Intent of the *Shi*).

help but laugh at the premise of *Shengmen zhuan Shi di zhong* 聖門傳詩嫡冢 (Annotations on the *Shi* From Direct Disciples of the Gate of the Sage),[68] while the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* describes *Shi ni* dismissively, stating "it is also rare to find any profound meaning in what it explains" 其所詮釋，亦罕逢奧義.[69] In both *Yan Shi yi* and *Shi ni*, Ling favoured a tradition of commentators more concerned with highlighting the literary aspects of the *Shi jing* over its role as a carrier of moral values,[70] an approach which may not have found favour with these later scholars. Ling's interest in the *Shi jing* did not wane after his successful foray into fiction, with *Yan Shi yi* being published after the first *Pai'an jingqi* collection in 1630.

Ling seems to have been more gifted at *ci* lyrics. After recording a set of ten *ci* that a courtesan composed for her lover and a variety of responses in the same rhyme scheme, Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆 (b.1559) wrote that "Alas, my friend Ling Chucheng loves new *ci*, and even he found it hard to compose in the same rhyme scheme. My untalented self should lay my brush aside" 歎余友凌初成，最喜新詞，而難與和，宜不慧為閣筆矣.[71]

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[68] Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊, *Jingyi kao* 經義考 j.100, v.3 p.741.
[69] Ji Yun ed., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* j.17, p.479.
[70] Yang Zonghong 楊宗紅, "Ling Mengchu *Yan Shi yi* zhi wenxue zhixiang" 凌濛初《言詩翼》之文學指向, p.171; Yang Zonghong, "'Yi yi ni zhi' yu Ling Mengchu *Shi ni* shishi fangfa" 「以意逆志」與凌濛初《詩逆》釋詩方法, p.70.
[71] Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆, "Liu Runyu zhuan" 劉潤玉傳, *Genshi chao* 亙史抄, Waiji 外記 j.7, p.7a, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 v.193, p.578.

The genre in which Ling found the most success, aside from fiction, was his *qu* (song/drama) composition and criticism, which was highly influential. His drama criticism is discussed in detail below.[72] Of his drama compositions, only three works survive, though fortunately Qi Biaojia's (d.1645) 祁彪佳 *Yuanshantang Ming jupin* 遠山堂明劇品 (Ming Drama from the Hall of the Distant Mountain) contains descriptions of lost plays. Ling's dramas were highly regarded by his contemporaries: the great Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) believed that they "[unfolded] slowly and subtly, with light and shade" 緩隱濃淡 and said, "as for his talent, it is shining and kaleidoscopic" 至於才情，爛漫陸離;[73] Qi Biaojia, meanwhile, praised his "sublime talent" 妙才, "thorough reading of Yuan *qu*" 熟讀元曲, and the way in which his writing was "vigorous" and "stood out from the crowd" 遒勁不群.[74]

That Ling's *qu* were better received than his *shi* poetry can also be seen from their repeated anthologization. Feng Menglong included two *taoqu* 套曲 song suites, *Xibie* 惜別 (A Tender Parting) and *Shangshi* 傷逝 (Mourning Passing) in his work *Taixia xinzou* 太霞新奏 (A New Performance of High Sunset Clouds) and noted that "Chucheng [Ling Mengchu] has a noble and clear innate talent, and each stroke of his

[72] See page 66.
[73] Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, "Da Ling Chucheng" 答凌初成, *Tang Xianzu quanji* 湯顯祖全集, p.1442.
[74] Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳, *Yuanshantang Ming jupin* 遠山堂明劇品, *Yuanshantang Ming qupin jupin jiaolu* 遠山堂明曲品劇品校錄, p.156.

brush is immediately beautiful; his *ci* and *qu* are but one aspect [of his talents]". 初成天資高朗，下筆便俊。詞曲其一斑也.[75] Ling included these two *taoqu*, alongside many others from contemporary authors, in his own critical anthology *Nanyin san lai* 南音三籟 (Three Pipes of Southern Sound), modestly rating *Shangshi* as the sound of "earth" 地籟 and *Xibie* as the sound of "man" 人籟. The same two works also feature in the anthology *Wu sao hebian* 吳騷合編 (The Combined Collection of the Songs of Wu) alongside another, *Yechuang hua jiu* 夜窗話舊 (Talking of the Past by an Evening Window). The compiler Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 (no dates, contemporary of Ling) mentions the string of works Ling has edited and written which "mock the human world" and "have a spirit which swallows the world and spits it out again" 頗有謔浪人寰，吞吐一世之槩.[76] As *Wu sao hebian* was published in 1637, this may well refer in part to *Erpai*: certainly the description fits it well.

Further praise for Ling's drama comes from Wang Yun 汪榛 (no dates), the commentator on *Qiuran weng* 虯髯翁 (The Curly-Bearded Old Man), who remarked that

[75] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Taixia xinzou* 太霞新奏 j.6, p.9b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.1744, p.72.
[76] Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 ed., *Wu sao hebian* 吳騷合編 j.4, p.76a.

> As it gets more common (*su*), it grows more refined (*ya*); the clumsier it gets, the more skilful it becomes. Placed alongside the *zaju* of the vanquished state [the Yuan dynasty] it is equal to [the drama of] Guan [Hanqing] and Ma [Zhiyuan].
>
> 愈俗愈雅，愈拙愈巧，置之勝國雜劇中，不讓關、馬。[77]

The comment is an astute one, echoing the fundamental preoccupations of Ling Mengchu's dramatic theories expressed in *Nanyin san lai* which, as will be discussed, valued plain language in the authentic style of the Yuan period.

Leisure Activities

Ling's surviving poetry and drama are invaluable in providing us with a glimpse of a side of Ling's personality and life invisible in his epitaph. As suggested by his *hao*, Ling appears to have been attracted to the free-going, hard-drinking, unrestrained lifestyle of Wei-Jin 魏晉 literati, and wrote a *zaju* on one such figure, Liu Ling 劉伶 (221-300), which has since been lost. Qi Biaojia's description of it suggests that Ling Mengchu had a particular affinity with Liu Ling, going so far as to call himself "Wine Lover" 酒人 in homage.[78]

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[77] Wang Yun 汪榗, in Ling Mengchu, *Qiuran weng* 虬髯翁, *LMCQJ* v.4, p.10.
[78] Qi Biaojia, *Yuanshantang Ming jupin, Yuanshantang Ming qupin jupin jiaolu*, p.171.

Fragmentary records of his life in Nanjing's pleasure quarters are also available. *Xibie* describes a brief meeting in Nanjing with a courtesan from Suzhou. They enjoy a romantic evening together, but then she is forced to return to Suzhou by some unspecified malevolent force.[79] Zhao Hongjuan places this dalliance at around 1607, when Ling was 27.[80] The next year, Ling was involved in another romance with a courtesan from the Qinhuai 秦淮 area. Zhao Hongjuan analyses evidence from a *shi* poem by Ling's friend Dong Sizhang 董斯張 (1587-1628)[81] and Ling's own *taoqu Shangshi*, concluding that both works are about this woman, who must have died suddenly.[82]

These heartbreaks did nothing to turn him away from the pleasure quarters, and his works *Yechuang hua jiu* and *Qi gong* 七供 (A Confession in the *Qiti* Style) describe Ling's triangular affair with a courtesan known as Heyang Ji 河陽姬, competing with an official for her affections and winning.[83] Based on the introduction in *Wu sao hebian*, Ling met her when travelling in the north, and when he returned south she

[79] Feng Menglong, *Taixia xinzou* j.6, p.7b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.1744, p.71.
[80] Zhao Hongjuan, *Pai'an jingqi: Ling Mengchu zhuan* 拍案驚奇: 凌濛初傳, p.69.
[81] The poem is Dong Sizhang 董斯張, "Tan shi qu wei Ling Chucheng fu" 嘆逝曲為凌初成賦, *Jingxiao zhai cun cao* 靜嘯齋存草 j.4, p.10b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.1381, p.492.
[82] Zhao Hongjuan, *Pai'an jingqi: Ling Mengchu zhuan*, pp.74-77.
[83] Ling Mengchu, "Qi gong"七供, *LMCQJ* v.4, p.8.

gave up her profession to wait for him, living in poverty. The story as told by Ling ends happily, with the lovers reuniting in the south.[84]

Friends and Acquaintances

Ling was also in contact with a range of literary figures of the day. He corresponded with Tang Xianzu, though unfortunately only Tang's side of the exchange is extant. In the letter, Tang praises Ling's *qu* and discusses drama theory.[85] While living in Nanjing, he was visited by Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (1570-1624),[86] who only noted a painting on the wall,[87] and took part in literati gatherings with his friend Pan Zhiheng.[88] Pan Zhiheng, a noted drama critic and poet, came from a merchant background in Anhui, and enjoyed holding "*qu* banquets" with large numbers of courtesans in attendance.[89] It is easy to see how the two men may have got along, given their shared interests in theatre, commerce, and courtesans. They had a literary connection too: Ling based several stories in *Pai'an jingqi* on anecdotes in Pan's work *Genshi* 亙史 (An Eternal History), and took part in the editing and commentary of Pan's drama theory work *Luanxiao xiaopin* 鸞嘯小品 (Phoenix Cry Essays).[90]

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[84] Zhang Chushu ed., *Wu sao hebian* j.4, pp73a-76a.
[85] Tang Xianzu, "Da Ling Chucheng", *Tang Xianzu quanji*, p.1442.
[86] Goodrich, ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p.1638.
[87] Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道, *Youju shi lu* 游居柿錄 j.3, p.30.
[88] Zheng Zhiliang 鄭志良, "Ling Mengchu yizuo ji jiaoyou bukao" 凌濛初佚作及交遊補考, p.115.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

Ling's friendship with Chen Jiru is also significant, placing him in contact with one of the primary arbiters of taste in late Ming China, whose fame was so widespread people would use his name to sell cakes.[91] Qi Biaojia records how Chen was an admirer of Ling's drama, playing an influential role in the genesis of *Shi yingxiong Hongfu mang ze pei* 識英雄紅拂莽擇配 (Recognizing a Hero, Hongfu Hastily Chooses a Husband) and *Diandao yinyuan* 顛倒姻緣 (Topsy-turvy Marriage Destiny).[92] Chen's involvement in the creation of these works speaks volumes about the regard in which he held Ling's dramatic talents.

There is as yet not enough evidence to prove that Ling Mengchu met Feng. However, it does seem likely: Ling is known to have visited Suzhou with his friend Feng Mengzhen when Feng Menglong was living there.[93] In addition, it is possible that when Feng Menglong says that "*ci* and *qu* are but one aspect [of Ling Mengchu's talent]"[94] in *Taixia xinzou*, he is referring to a manuscript version of *Pai'an jingqi* shown to him in Nanjing. The chronology fits: the preface to *Taixia xinzou* is dated the 12th month of the seventh year of the Tianqi reign period (1627), and in the preface to *Erke pai'an jingqi* Ling mentions writing *Pai'an jingqi* in Nanjing the

[91] Greenbaum, *Chen Jiru (1558-1639): The Background to, Development and Subsequent Uses of Literary Personae*, p.xxxiv.
[92] See Qi Biaojia, *Yuanshantang Ming jupin*, *Yuanshantang Ming qupin jupin jiaolu*, p.156.
[93] Feng Baoshan, "Ling Mengchu jiaoyou xin tan" 凌濛初交遊新探, p.75.
[94] Feng Menglong, *Taixia xinzou* j.6, p.9b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.1744, p.72.

autumn of that year and showing the manuscript to various friends. It is certainly possible that Feng Menglong was one of these friends.

Despite mixing in distinguished circles and connecting with an "all-star cast in the late Ming world of letters",[95] Ling was fundamentally a marginal member of the late Ming literati. Feng Baoshan notes that most of the time it was Ling who initiated meetings with the more high-ranking of his friends rather than the other way around.[96] Moreover, in the introductory notes to *Shi yingxiong Hongfu mang ze pei*, Sun Qidu 孫起都 (no dates) states that "My friend Ling Chucheng [Mengchu] has great natural talent, but few know of him…" 吾友凌初成天賦特異，而知者絕少.[97] While *Pai'an jingqi* would ensure that he is remembered to the present day, Ling came to fiction comparatively late on, and it was only one of a broad range of interests spanning three distinct careers- writer, publisher, and official. He pursued Confucian *Shi jing* scholarship, held aesthetic views influenced by Daoist philosophy,[98] and also described himself as a "disciple of the Buddha" 佛弟子.[99]

[95] Chang, Kang-i Sun and Stephen Owen ed., *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, v.2, p.125.
[96] Feng Baoshan, "Ling Mengchu shishi si kao", p.112.
[97] Sun Qidu 孫起都, "Shu Hongfu zaju" 書紅拂雜劇, in Ling Mengchu, *Shi yingxiong Hongfu mang ze pei* 識英雄紅拂莽擇配, *LMCQJ* v.4, p.1.
[98] See page 67 below.
[99] Ling Mengchu ed., *Fojing liangzhong* 佛經兩種, *LMCQJ* v.9, p.2.

An overview of Ling's three careers serves to contextualise *Erpai* and opens up new perspectives on the stories. It also cautions against an overly one-dimensional description of him as an "author" or "dramatist": Ling was, at different times, a failed student, dissolute pleasure seeker, canny commercial publisher, trenchant drama critic, mediocre *shi* poet, and patriotic military official. Fiction writing was just one part of his life.

***Huaben* fiction**

Ling's fiction is part of a genre that can be termed *huaben* 話本 fiction. However, this classification is problematic, as the exact definition of the term *huaben* is highly contested. The debate covers three separate yet related issues: the original definition of the term, and whether this definition includes the meaning "storyteller's prompt book"; the link between the written genre and oral storytelling; and finally, what modern scholars mean when referring to "*huaben*" fiction and the criteria used to categorise a work as such.

Lu Xun's 魯迅 work *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中國小說史略 (A Brief History of Chinese Fiction) defined "*huaben*" as a prompt book used by storytellers as a basis for improvisation.[100] This definition is reiterated by Hu Shiying 胡士瑩 in his seminal

[100] Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中國小說史略, p.104.

work *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun* 話本小說概論 (An Overview of Huaben Fiction), possibly the most in-depth and wide-ranging examination of the genre to date, in no uncertain terms: "The term '*huaben*' in a strict, scientific sense, should mean, and should only mean, a prompt book used in storytelling" 話本，在嚴格的、科學的意義上說來，應該是，並且僅僅是說話藝術的底本.[101] Hu preferred the term found in his work's title, *huaben xiaoshuo* (*huaben* fiction), for the genre of fiction.[102]

Lu Xun's definition was widely accepted in academic circles,[103] until Japanese scholar Masuda Wataru 增田涉 published an article questioning it. Masuda's article argues that the term should actually be understood as meaning "story" in the abstract sense, and occasionally "story material". Charles Wivell arrived independently at the same conclusion, stating that "the evidence indicates that the term *hua-pen* [*huaben*] was used in a very general sense. It meant 'story' or 'plot'."[104] This explanation in turn won its supporters, though it has also been disputed. Differences in opinion often hinge on different interpretations of the same source materials. For example, the phrase "the *huaben* has been read to the end, now disperse" 話本說徹，且作散場,[105]

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[101] Hu Shiying 胡士瑩, *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun* 話本小說概論, p.200.
[102] Ibid., p.201.
[103] As reflected in the subtitle of Masuda's article: "Doubts about the common theory (or perhaps accepted theory)" 通説（あるいは定説）への疑問.
[104] Wivell, "The Term '*Hua-pen*'", p.304.
[105] The word *sanchang* 散場 can also be interpreted as a "short final performance after the main piece". See Hu Lianyu 胡蓮玉, "Zai bian 'huaben' bing fei 'shuohuaren de diben'" 再辯'話本'並非'說話人之底本', p.109.

found in stories such as "Jiantie heshang" 簡帖和尚 (The Calling Card Monk) from *Qingpingshantang huaben* 清平山堂話本 (*Huaben* from the Hall of the Peaceful Mountain),[106] is cited both by Masuda in support of his thesis,[107] and Zhang Bing 張兵 in his rebuttal of it.[108] This highlights an underlying issue: the paucity of relevant materials, especially before the Ming. Therefore, a significant portion of the evidence on how the term is used is taken from the *Erpai* and *Sanyan* collections. Both literati creations of the late Ming, with a vast temporal and social gulf separating their authors and a Song or Yuan storyteller, these works are not ideal sources for proving or disproving an original sense of "prompt book". While there is persuasive evidence to suggest that the term has been used in relation to printed texts as well as "story" in the abstract,[109] there is little agreement among scholars about what the specific definition of "*huaben*" should be.

For example, Xiao Xinqiao 蕭欣橋 proposes a different explanation: that the original meaning of the word is "story material", or the "root" (本 *ben*) of the story (話

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[106] Hong Pian 洪楩 ed., "Jiantie heshang" 簡帖和尚, *Qingpingshantang huaben* 清平山堂話本, p.12.
[107] Masuda Wataru 増田渉, "'Wahon' toiu koto nitsuite: tsūsetsu (arui wa teisetsu) e no gimon" 話本ということについて：通説（あるいは定説）への疑問, p.25.
[108] Zhang Bing 張兵, "'Huaben' de dingyi yu qita" 話本的定義與其他, p.61.
[109] The preface of *Gujin xiaoshuo* shows that *huaben* could be "read" 閱, and also were also "bound" 帙. Lütianguan zhuren 綠天官主人, "Lütianguan zhuren xu" 綠天官主人敘, in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646; Zhang Bing, "'Huaben' de dingyi yu qita", p61-2. Masuda treats this mention as an "exception", and suggests that it could also be read as "story" in this context. See Masuda Wataru, "'Wahon' toiu koto nitsuite: tsūsetsu (arui wa teisetsu) e no gimon", p32-33.

hua),[110] while it can also mean "story book" and "story".[111] In Xiao's definition scheme, *huaben* originally referred to works such as *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 (Record of the Listener) that were used as resources by storytellers; later it came to refer to a literary form. Xiao also makes a further distinction between *huaben* in the sense of a literary form, referring to published storyteller's prompt books, and *huaben xiaoshuo* 話本小說 (*huaben* fiction), referring to *huaben* that have undergone literati polishing.[112] By way of concrete illustration, "primitive" 原始 works from the *Qingpingshantang huaben* are included in the former category, while more mature works are included in the latter.[113]

Zhou Zhaoxin 周兆新 takes a slightly different view. He approaches the issue not from a linguistic perspective, as Masuda Wataru and Xiao Xinqiao did, but through analysing the form of contemporary storyteller prompt books and comparing these with early *huaben*. While he agrees that *huaben* may have meant "prompt book" in addition to "story" and "story book",[114] he does not think that the early vernacular stories we see today were prompt books. Prompt books as seen in present-day storytelling practice are more of an outline, and logically, the storyteller would have

[110] Xiao Xinqiao 蕭欣橋, "Guanyu 'huaben' dingyi de sikao: ping Masuda Wataru 'Lun "huaben" de dingyi" 關於'話本'定義的思考: 評增田涉《論"話本"的定義》, p.114.
[111] Ibid., p.109; p.110.
[112] Ibid., p.115.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Zhou Zhaoxin 周兆新, "'Huaben' shiyi" '話本'釋義, p.310.

had no need to note down stock phrases such as "please disperse".[115] He concludes that only a tiny proportion of early vernacular stories could have been prompt books: he does not go as far as to say that they definitely were.[116] Shi Changyu 石昌渝, meanwhile, who agrees that *huaben* can be a physical object but not necessarily a storyteller's prompt book, proposes three different meanings: *chuanqi* fiction, "story" in the abstract sense, and the physical text of a vernacular story.[117]

The existence of so many definitions is inevitable given the severe lack of records available and the contested interpretations of these records; without further evidence being uncovered, it may be impossible to reach a final conclusion. While there appears to be sufficient evidence to say that the word referred at the very least to 1) the source material of a story, 2) a physical text, and 3) a "story" in the abstract sense, the key issue of whether the "physical text" referred to a storyteller's prompt book, a published storyteller's prompt book, or a vernacular fiction text remains unresolved. Even if it did refer to a prompt book, Zhou Zhaoxin's work strongly suggests that these would have been very different to the short stories we see today.

[115] Ibid., p.308.
[116] Ibid., p.307.
[117] Shi Changyu 石昌渝, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo yuanliu lun* 中國小說源流論, pp.223-224.

This has certain implications for the separate, broader question of how the vernacular short story developed: if *huaben* originally referred to a storyteller's prompt book, this etymological evidence would support the thesis that the vernacular stories grew out of oral storytelling as a result of the publishing and imitation of prompt books. However, the two issues cannot be conflated: if *huaben* meant "prompt book", this theory would not automatically be proved; conversely *huaben* not having the meaning of "prompt book" would not in itself be enough to disprove it.

Therefore, it is necessary to step back from the debate over the exact definition of the word "*huaben*" when considering this issue. What does seem definite is that the storytelling tradition had a certain influence over the stories, though not necessarily a direct one: the texts "retained the oral literature as a model, to some degree".[118] The early texts, identified by Patrick Hanan as being written prior to 1450, "bear an obvious relationship to professional oral fiction as described in Song and Yuan works, sharing much of its stuff-material and fitting its typology in many instances".[119] Zhou Zhaoxin makes an important distinction between the idea of the genre being directly descended from prompt books, and the idea that it was influenced by the live art of storytelling; he favours the latter theory.[120]

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[118] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.6.
[119] Ibid., p.28.
[120] Zhou Zhaoxin, "'Huaben' shiyi", p.308.

The "storyteller's manner", an addition of later literati editors and not a vestige of the genre's origins, cannot be taken to signify a direct descent from a storyteller's prompt book. Rather, most authors used previous vernacular fiction as their model, and "may have been unaware of the influence of the oral model, accepting certain of its features as a successful narrative model without realizing their provenance."[121] Nor was this the only factor influencing their writing: Idema also highlights the role of drama and literati fiction, concluding that, "the two most important genres in the creation of the *hua-pen* [*huaben*] were *wen-yen ch'uan-ch'i* [*wenyan chuanqi*] and the drama",[122] while cautioning against ascribing the genres's origin to a single source.[123] Zhou Zhaoxin also rejects the theory of a linear progression from simple prompt books to the more complex vernacular short stories, highlighting that each individual short story shows a different mix of influences.[124]

Certainly, with literati involved in the creative process, it is only natural that influences from other genres would have found their way into the stories: Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu were both active in drama as well as fiction. It is also true that Ling Mengchu did see the two genres as being especially closely related

[121] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.22.
[122] Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period*, p.23.
[123] Ibid., p.102.
[124] Zhou Zhaoxin, "'Huaben' shiyi", p.308-309.

(though Ling was many years removed from the origins of the vernacular story). There is also evidence that Ling was aware of and influenced by the live art of the storyteller. In *Nanyin san lai*, he makes a reference to "storytellers" 說書家 when arguing that as elaborate parallel prose passages are used in storytelling, they are also suitable for drama.[125] The choice of words here implies that he incorporated such passages into his fiction and drama after hearing a live storyteller use them.

Uncertainty on the question of how vernacular stories developed also feeds into inconsistencies in the scope of what modern scholars include in the genre known as *huaben*. There are two fundamental approaches to this: examining the genesis of a work and grouping works by their formal features.

Examining the genesis of a work in this context primarily involves assessing the scale of literati involvement in the writing process and the assumed purpose of the work: for reading or performance. The usual result is to class early "Song and Yuan" stories,[126] taken to be the product of early storytellers, separately to the later creations of literati such as Feng Menglong and Ling Mengchu. This method assumes an

[125] Ling Mengchu, "Tan qu zazha" 譚曲雜劄, *Nanyin san lai* 南音三籟*, LMCQJ* v.4., p.6.
[126] Hanan has dated many works that were thought to be from the Song and Yuan dynasties to the Ming, concluding that "The Chinese short story as we know it could not have antedated the thirteenth century, and the likelihood is that it did not much antedate the Yüan dynasty". Use of the term in this study does not imply support of the idea that these stories date from the Song. Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition*, p.163.

acceptance of the theory that the stories were directly descended from storytelling prompt books. Defining *huaben* fiction in this way also involves placing literati works such as those of Ling Mengchu into the genre of "imitation *huaben*" or *nihuaben* 擬話本. This is the approach taken by Lu Xun and Sun Kaidi 孫楷第.[127] However, this definition means that the borders between *huaben* and *nihuaben* can be somewhat unclear and depend on individual interpretation. For example, Zhang Bing classes *Qingpingshantang huaben* as an "imitation *huaben*",[128] while Xiao Xinqiao classes some works in this collection as *huaben* and others as *huaben xiaoshuo*, a category from which "Ming imitations" are expressly excluded.[129] The concept of the *nihuaben* has also been criticised for this vagueness: Zhou Zhaoxin condemns its "unscientific" premise, regards it as confusing, and calls for it to be scrapped.[130]

The alternative approach is descriptive, involving defining the genre through a set of formal features, most notably the storyteller's manner. This has the advantage that it relies solely on known information (the text itself), rendering it more objective. Meanwhile, it does not imply acceptance of the unproven theory that the stories

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[127] Lu Xun termed late Ming literati works "Ming imitations of Song urban fiction" 明人擬宋市人小說, using the term 擬話本 for Song and Yuan works that showed influences from *huaben*. Despite the difference in terminology, his criteria and approach were the same as outlined here. See Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, p.111; p.183. Sun Kaidi applied the term to late Ming works. See Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, "Zhongguo duanpian baihua xiaoshuo de fazhan" 中國短篇白話小說的發展, p.56.
[128] Zhang Bing, "'Huaben' de dingyi yu qita", p.65.
[129] Xiao Xinqiao, "Guanyu 'huaben' dingyi de sikao: ping Masuda Wataru 'Lun "huaben" de dingyi", p.115.
[130] Zhou Zhaoxin, "'Huaben' shiyi", pp.310-311.

originated as storyteller's prompts. Hu Lianyu 胡蓮玉 settles on a definition along these lines: "Song and Yuan literature with prominent features of oral literature".[131] This remains problematic, however, given the doubts that any surviving stories date from prior to the Yuan. The definition can also be expanded further to encompass all literature that features the storyteller's manner: though Hanan prefers to use the word "story", *The Chinese Vernacular Story* implicitly takes this approach, indicating no division at a generic level between authored and anonymous texts.[132] Though Sun Kaidi classed Ming "imitations" separately to "Song and Yuan" stories, he also admitted that the differences between them on a formal level were minimal.[133] It is also the definition favoured by Zhou Zhaoxin, who sees no formal distinction between the "Song and Yuan" stories and the later works of Feng and Ling.[134] Shi Changyu also utilises a similar definition: "fiction originating in the art of storytelling and retaining the narrative method of storytelling" 源於'說話'伎藝並且仍然保持著'說話'的敘事方式的小說.[135]

As is apparent from the use of the term in previous sections, this thesis takes the position that the definition of *huaben* can cover a range of meanings, in no order of preference 1) the source material of a story, 2) a physical text, and 3) "story" in the

[131] Hu Lianyu, "Zai bian 'huaben' fei 'shuohuaren zhi diben'", p.112.
[132] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.9.
[133] Sun Kaidi, "Zhongguo duanpian baihua xiaoshuo de fazhan", p.56.
[134] Zhou Zhaoxin, "'Huaben' shiyi", pp.310-311.
[135] Shi Changyu, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo yuanliu lun*, p.224.

abstract sense, but that it is not proven whether it referred to a storyteller's prompt book. When the word *huaben* fiction is used in this thesis to denote a genre, it is used as defined in a descriptive way, referring to works of vernacular short fiction with prominent features of oral literature. The *huaben* fiction genre is seen as being influenced by the live art of professional storytelling, but not exclusively so; other genres, especially drama and literary language tales, also played an important role in its development.

Erpai

Ling's contribution to *huaben* fiction comes in the form of the two *Pai'an jingqi* collections. Published in 1628 and 1632 respectively, they contain a total of 78 different stories. The first editions of both collections were published by Shangyou tang 尚友堂 in Suzhou, but only the first collection survives in a complete first edition, held in Japan.[136] There is also a Fu shangyou tang 覆尚友堂 edition with only 39 stories (missing story 23; story 40 has been moved to *juan* 23), also held in Japan.[137] The earliest known copy of *Erke pai'an jingqi*, published by Shangyou tang, is missing stories 23 and 40.[138] To make up the numbers, story 23 from the first

[136] For a facsimile of this edition, see *Guben xiaoshuo congkan* 古本小說叢刊, series 13, v.1-4.
[137] For a facsimile of this edition, see *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* 古本小說集成, series 5 v.1-4.
[138] For a facsimile of this edition, see *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng*, series 5 v.5-8; *Guben xiaoshuo congkan*, series 14, v.1-5.

collection has been transferred across, and one of Ling's *zaju* included in place of story 40. The publication of the second collection led to the first collection sometimes being retrospectively termed *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement, Volume 1).

Zhang Peiheng has suggested that Ling also wrote a third collection entitled *Erxu pai'an jingqi* 二續拍案驚奇 (A Second Continuation of *Pai'an jingqi*), based on inconsistencies in the *banxin* 版心 inscription in the centre of the wood blocks in some stories.[139] He suggests that some stories from this third collection were included in the edition of *Erke pai'an jingqi* that survives today. Zhao Hongjuan also notes in support of this theory that in the Tongzhi 同治 era Shengshe records three *Pai'an jingqi* collections are attributed to Ling Mengchu.[140] However, Li Jinquan 李金泉 convincingly rebuts this idea through reference to the anthology *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 (Strange Sights from Past and Present): story 5, one of the stories claimed to have been originally from *Erxu pai'an jingqi* and subsequently moved to *Erke pai'an jingqi*, is included in the collection, yet the editor mentions only two collections in the

[139] Zhang Peiheng 章培恆, "Yingyin *Erke pai'an jingqi* xu" 影印《二刻拍案驚奇》序, in Ling Mengchu, *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (1985 Shanghai guji chubanshe edition), p.2a-b.
[140] Zhao Hongjuan, "*Liangpai* banben kaoshu" 《兩拍》版本考述, p.100-101; Min Baoliang ed., *Shengshe zhenzhi (Tongzhi)* j.6, p.13a, in *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng*, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* v.24, p.1095.

preface.[141] Furthermore, Li points out that these *banxin* inscriptions are easily modified, and this fact alone is not sufficient to prove the existence of a third collection: there are many other examples of incorrectly modified *banxin* in the two existing collections alone.[142] As for the mention in the town records, it is highly likely that Min Baoliang, writing many years after Ling Mengchu, could have mistakenly thought that he was the author of the unrelated work *Sanke pai'an jingqi* 三刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement, Volume Three).[143] Overall, it seems most probable that there were indeed only two collections.

Ling also added marginal and interlinear commentary to his stories. As this thesis regards the marginal commentaries as an integral part of the work, it is necessary to underline that Ling Mengchu wrote the commentary. First of all, the title page of the 40 *juan* Shangyou tang edition of *Pai'an jingqi* carries the inscription "Fiction With Illustrations, Read and Appraised by Jikongguan" 即空觀評閱出像小說, providing paratextual proof.[144] Proof internal to the work itself is seen in comments such as that found in story II-6, where Ling complains about the aesthetic value of a letter found in his source.[145] Zhang Peiheng concludes, based on this evidence, that "there is

[141] Li Jinquan 李金泉, "Guanyu *Erke pai'an jingqi* de banben" 關於《二刻拍案驚奇》的版本, p.344-345.
[142] Ibid., p.345-346.
[143] Ibid., p.345.
[144] See *Guben xiaoshuo congkan*, series 13, v.1, p.1.
[145] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.116.

absolutely no doubt that the comments were written by [Ling] Mengchu" 批語之出于濛初，殆無疑義.[146]

In *Erpai*, Ling is a far more prolific commentator than Feng Menglong in *Sanyan*. There are 1164 comments in the first collection and 966 in the second, compared with 481, 503, and 557 in *Gujin xiaoshuo*, *Jingshi tongyan,* and *Xingshi hengyan* respectively (*Xingshi hengyan* is significantly longer than either of Ling's collections). Not only does he comment at nearly twice the rate of Feng, his comments are more evenly spread, with every story having comments and all but one having more than 10. In contrast, there are some *Sanyan* stories in which the commentator is completely silent,[147] and it is not uncommon for stories to have comments in the single figures. The increased quantity of commentary in *Erpai* suggests that it is more important in the text than in *Sanyan*, and as the analysis in Chapters Three and Four shows, it does indeed play a crucial role in the story's didacticism and entertainment functions.

While the stories in *Erpai* are very varied, there are a few general themes and story types identifiable. The supernatural plays a far more minor role than in Feng

[146] Zhang Peiheng, "Yingyin *Erke pai'an jingqi* xu", in Ling Mengchu, *Erke pai'an jingqi* (1985 Shanghai guji chubanshe edition), p.3b.
[147] i.e, GJ-20 and HY-7.

Menglong's works, and most stories are rooted firmly in the human world. Common topics include rash young men who are led astray by their sexual and material desires, the hypocrisy and lechery of monks and nuns, illustrations of marital predestination, and dramatizations of unusual court cases. The stories feature far fewer major historical personages than the *Sanyan* collections, and instead portray relatively minor characters such as merchants, lower ranking officials and gentry, and wealthy young men.

Sources and Ling's authorial role

As Feng Menglong had collected and edited most available existing vernacular stories in *Sanyan*, Ling had to look further afield for inspiration. Ling's unusually frank admission of his role in the collections allowed him to dispense with the pretence of popular origin and tap new sources for his stories, basing his tales almost exclusively on literary language tales and anecdotes. He was particularly indebted to *Yijian zhi*, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era), and *Jiandeng xinhua* 剪燈新話 (New Tales Told While Trimming the Wick). Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧 has located the majority of these source materials in his work *Sanyan-Liangpai ziliao* 《三言》、《兩拍》資料 (Materials on *Sanyan-Liangpai*). This allows the modern reader to assess Ling's creative role in the works. Opinions differ on this issue: Sun Kaidi believes that "his efforts are substantively equal to creation" 其功力實亦等於

創作,[148] while Patrick Hanan thinks that "Ling is more beholden to his sources [than Feng]; in one or two cases, he is an adapter rather than a creator."[149]

Certainly, his treatment of source materials varies from story to story. Huang Aihua 黃愛華 has identified four basic methods of adaptation: following the source; rearranging the source; changing the theme; and developing a story from an incident.[150] Some stories, such as the introductory story to I-7, are little more than vernacular translations of the literary language originals. Others, such as the main story of I-9, are more elaborated in minor areas, especially dialogue, but otherwise stick very closely to the original, to the extent that whole paragraphs are sometimes nearly identical to the source.[151]

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[148] Sun Kaidi, "*Sanyan-Erpai* yuanliu kao" 《三言二拍》源流考, p.130.

[149] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.145.

[150] Huang Aihua 黃愛華, "Jianxi *Erpai* sucai gaibian de jizhong moshi" 簡析《二拍》素材改編的幾種模式, p.72.

[151] This passage from the end of the story is a good example: "When the soldiers of Heaven reached Yan, the Shun Emperor visited the Qingning Hall, and gathered the Empress, concubines, and princes from the three palaces to discuss escaping from the soldiers. Heisi and the prime minister Shiliemen cried and remonstrated, saying 'All under heaven belongs to the founding emperor. It should be defended to the death'. The emperor did not heed them, and in the middle of the night fled from the Jiande Gate. Heisi followed into the desert, and it is not known what became of him." The original reads: 天兵至燕，順帝禦清寧殿，集三宮後妃皇太子同議避兵。黑斯與丞相失列門哭諫曰：「天下者，世祖之天下也。當以死守。」不聽，夜半開建德門而遁。黑斯隨入沙漠，不知所終. With the differences highlighted, Ling's version reads: 天兵至燕，**元**順帝禦清寧殿，集三宮**皇后**太子同議避兵。黑斯與丞相失列門哭諫**道**：「天下者，世祖之天下也。當以死守。」**順帝**不聽，夜半開建德門而遁去。黑斯隨入沙漠，不知所終. See Li Zhen 李禎, "Qiuqian hui ji" 秋千會記, *Jiandeng yuhua* 剪燈餘話 j.4, cited from Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.635; Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.137.

Another group of stories are the product of more radical adaptation. The source for I-15 describes the main character, a scholar, as being a "cunning" 姦巧 person who "enjoys ensnaring people with tricks and taking their money" 好以術困人而取其資.[152] He sells a house to a Huizhou merchant who makes improvements to it, before the scholar frames the merchant for murder in order to get the house back at the original price. In Ling's version, the scholar is given a new name and a more detailed back story, becoming a well-meaning wastrel who burns through his money before being forced to sell the house at far under its true value to a crafty Huizhou merchant, who falsely claims to have made additions to it and unreasonably refuses to sell it back. The scholar then uses the same trick as in the source to get his house back.[153] This is an example of what Huang Aihua terms "changing the theme". The most thorough model of adaptation is "developing a story from an incident", such as in I-10, where Ling develops the story of the previously unmarriable Han Shiyu 韓師愈 finding a wife due to a panic at a rumour that the Emperor was searching for concubines from sources that merely mention said rumour.[154] Of course, the absence of a more complete source is not necessarily proof that one did not originally exist: it could be currently undiscovered or even based on an oral story.

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[152] Feng Menglong, "Zazhi bu wenke" 雜智部文科, *Zhinang bu* 智囊補 j.27, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.657.
[153] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, pp.215-226.
[154] Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.642; Feng Baoshan, "Ling Mengchu xiaoshuo 'Han xiucai cheng luan pin jiaoqi' yu 'Xing xiao zi daodi bu jian shi' benshi buzheng" 凌濛初小說《韓秀才乘亂聘嬌妻》與《行孝子到底不簡屍》本事補證; Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, pp.140-153.

Of course, this approach to assessing Ling's creative role, through comparing the stories with their sources, is largely focused on the perspective of the plots of the individual stories, which by no means make up the entirety of the creative work. In addition to the plots, there is the underlying process of selecting source materials for inclusion, in which he plays a role more akin to an editor. Furthermore, there is the process of adding elements such as the storyteller's manner, discursive passages, poetry (both original and works by earlier poets), and marginal commentary. While these do not necessarily affect the plot of the story, they do hold great power over its meaning and interpretation; they can be regarded as equally pertinent to the question of creative input as the events in the plots of the stories themselves. The decision to regard Ling as a creator, not an adaptor, in this thesis is informed by this broader view of the creative work involved.

In addition, there is evidence, explored further in Chapter Five,[155] that Ling presented himself as an authorial figure: he uses a known pseudonym to sign the works, and paratextual materials written by other figures praise his talents, discuss his personal conception of *qi*, explore his state of mind during the composition of the stories, and highlight his intentions for the work. Combined with the way that Ling frankly

[155] See p.348.

discusses the circumstances behind the writing of the book in his prefaces, this in effect pulls the genre closer to the literati, marking a sharp contrast with Feng Menglong's claims of a popular origin.

Reception and transmission

In addition to the pre-publication history of the stories, their reception after publication is also relevant. Ling claimed great commercial success for his collections in the preface to *Erke*, saying "the merchants tried it once, and saw that it was effective, and so planned to try it again" 賈人一試之而效，謀再試之.[156] However, there is a lack of direct evidence from more objective sources as to whether this really was the case. Instead, indirect evidence must be pieced together.

First of all, the very fact of the existence of the second collection suggests that the first was indeed successful. Secondly, the inclusion of stories from *Erpai* in the anthology *Jingu qiguan* shows that it enjoyed a measure of success with contemporary literati, even though the number of works from Ling's collections (11) is significantly less than those from Feng's (29). While the compiler of *Jingu qiguan*

[156] Ling Mengchu, "*Erke pai'an jingqi* xiaoyin" 《二刻拍案驚奇》小引, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.3.

claimed to have aesthetic and moral reasons for selecting stories for inclusion,[157] there was very likely an unspoken commercial motivation too.

This is not the only anthology containing stories from *Erpai*. The National Library of France holds a work that combines stories from *Erke pai'an jingqi* with some from the 1632 collection *Xingshi yan* 型世言 (Words for Forming the World), written by Lu Renlong 陸人龍 (fl.1632).[158] The whole collection is entitled *Pai'an jingqi erji* 拍案驚奇二集 (Slapping the Table in Amazement Collection Two) and attributed to Ling Mengchu, prefaced with the introduction to *Erke pai'an jingqi*. It is now known among scholars as *Bieben erke pai'an jingqi* 別本二刻拍案驚奇 (An Alternative Edition of Erke pai'an jingqi). The fact that this book was presented in this rather dishonest way, and not as a genuine anthology, suggests that Ling Mengchu and the *Pai'an jingqi* "brand" had gathered a certain value for those wishing to make money from commercial publishing. The cachet of the *Pai'an jingqi* collections is also shown through the way that stories from *Xingshi yan* were also repackaged and sold under the name *Sanke pai'an jingqi* 三刻拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement Volume Three).

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[157] Sun Kaidi identifies the criteria as 1) prominent karmic retribution; 2) clear didactic tendencies; 3) novel plots; 5) old gossip that provides fuel for conversation 一曰著果報，二曰明勸懲，三曰情節新奇，四曰故典瑣聞，可資談助. Sun Kaidi, "*Sanyan-Erpai* yuanliu kao", p.132.

[158] This book has been digitised and can be downloaded in full from these links (3 files): http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90061757; http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9006188v; http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90061898.

Other Qing dynasty commercially oriented anthologies that incorporate stories from *Erpai* include *Jueshi yayan* 覺世雅言 (Elegant Words to Enlighten the World) (1 story); *Renzhong hua* 人中畫 (Painting in the Person) (1 story); *Jingu chuanqi* 今古傳奇 (Strange Tales Past and Present) (3 stories); *Jingshi qiguan* 警世奇觀 (Strange Sights to Warn the World) (3 stories); *Zai tuanyuan* 再團圓 (Reunion) (1 story); *Huanyuan qiyu xiaoshuo* 幻緣奇遇小說 (Fiction of Illusory Destiny and Extraordinary Meetings) (2 stories); *Erqi hezhuan* 二奇合傳 (Two *Qi*s Recorded Together) (22 stories); and *Xu jingu qiguan* 續今古奇觀 (Strange Sights from Past and Present Continued) (29 stories).[159] The sheer number of anthologies, combined with the 17 Qing editions of *Pai'an jingqi* still extant (however, there are no Qing *Erke pai'an jingqi* editions surviving today),[160] show that the stories remained popular among readers despite multiple bans targeting the works during the Qing.[161] Lu Xun and Cheng Guofu 程國賦 suggest that certain anthologies were in fact a way to get around the bans,[162] showing that there was a high demand for the stories that publishers were willing to bend the rules in order to meet.

[159] Cheng Guofu 程國賦, *Sanyan-Erpai chuanbo yanjiu* 《三言》、《二拍》傳播研究, p.33-34.
[160] Ibid., p.9-10.
[161] See Wang Liqi 王利器 ed., *Yuan Ming Qing san dai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao (zengding ben)* 元明清三代禁毀小說戲曲史料 (增訂本), pp.121-123; 131-136; 142-148.
[162] Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, p.191; Cheng Guofu, *Sanyan-Erpai chuanbo yanjiu*, p.37.

This continuing popularity in the Qing is underlined by evidence from the anonymous circa 1798 *gong'an* 公案 (court case) novel *Shi gong'an* 施公案 (The Cases of Judge Shi). In chapter one, Judge Shi "read *Pai'an jingqi* from beginning to end" 將《拍案驚奇》從頭至尾看完 before becoming so bored by another book it sends him to sleep.[163] It would seem strange of the author to make such a specific reference to the book if they did not think it to be popular enough to be known by their readers. Despite the lack of direct evidence, it seems likely that Ling's boast of commercial success was justified.

Ling Mengchu's conceptions of fiction and drama

This section examines the ideas on the nature of fiction which underlie the success of *Pai'an jingqi*, and in particular the place of didacticism and entertainment in these ideas. Critical opinion on the most important consideration in Ling's conception of fiction varies, though most agree that it is either entertainment or didacticism (Feng Baoshan rates a concern for realism as more important than entertainment).[164] Ma Meixin 馬美信 stresses the importance of entertainment in Ling's ideas about the nature and function of fiction: for Ma, while Ling believed didacticism was important, entertainment was more important to him.[165] Zhang Bing and Li Guikui 李

[163] Anon., *Shi gong quan'an* 施公全案, p.2.
[164] Feng Baoshan, *Ling Mengchu* 凌濛初, p.34.
[165] Ma Meixin 馬美信, *Ling Mengchu he Erpai* 凌濛初和《二拍》, p.26.

桂奎 interpret the importance of entertainment in the work as a result of Ling catering to the aesthetic needs of the urban classes.[166] On the other hand, Hu Shiying sees "feudal moralizing" 封建說教 as the main intention behind the works,[167] agreeing with Lu Xun's argument that late Ming vernacular fiction in general was characterised by "endless screeds of warnings, their noise drowning out their host" 誥誡連篇，喧而奪主.[168]

This thesis takes the position that Ling Mengchu saw both entertainment and didacticism as essential functions of the vernacular story, with neither one being any more important than the other. Demonstrating this first requires an examination of his conception of the closely related genre of drama, and in particular the importance Ling attached to the concepts of *bense* and *danghang.* In addition, the comparison between Ling's concepts of drama and fiction helps to highlight crossovers between the two, as well as features that Ling saw as being particular to fiction.

Drama

[166] Zhang Bing, *Ling Mengchu yu Liangpai* 凌濛初與《兩拍》, p.91; Li Guikui 李桂奎, "Lun *Erpai* chuangzuo de shichang jingji yishi" 論《二拍》創作的市場經濟意識, pp.54-56.
[167] Hu Shiying, *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun*, p.586.
[168] Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, p.188.

Ling's drama theories are expressed in his 1626 work *Nanyin san lai*. It is composed of two sections. The first, "Tan qu zazha" 譚曲雜劄 (Miscellaneous Discussions on *Qu*), is an exposition of Ling's theories of drama and song, while the second is a collection of *qu*, each commented on and placed into one of three categories- "Earth", "Man", and "Heaven". The sound of "Heaven" is "ancient, simple, and natural; with a professional's authenticity" 古質自然、行家本色; the sound of "Earth" is "free, easy, and well-thought out, often revealing its texture" 俊逸有思、時露質地; while "if [a work] is but decorated and ornate, and follows the example of decadent lyrics, though it may be famous in lyric circles and its sound reach the common ear, it is only known as the sound of Man" 若但粉飾藻繢、沿襲靡詞者，雖名重詞流，聲傳里耳，概謂之人籟而已.[169] From the descriptions, it is plain where Ling's preferences lie. The work inspired Feng Menglong's *Taixia xinzou*,[170] and is a key text for understanding Ling's aesthetic values. The title reveals a Daoist influence, making reference to the *Zhuangzi*,[171] and Ling's theories place great emphasis on the natural. This is made clear in the introduction, which states that

[169] Ling Mengchu, "*Nanyin san lai* fanli" 《南音三籟》凡例, *Nanyin san lai*, *LMCQJ* v.4, p.3.
[170] Ma Meixin, *Ling Mengchu he Erpai,* p.8.
[171] Zhuangzi 莊子, "Qiwu lun yi" 齊物論一, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, in Chen Guying 陳鼓應 ed., *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今注今譯, p.39-40.

Qu have a natural sound; sound has natural rhythm. This is not related to the writer, nor to the singer. It simply *is*, without one knowing why. Those who have mastered its sound are able to not set a key and mode; those who understand its rhythm are able to not write characters.

曲有自然之音，音有自然之節，非關作者，亦非關謳者，莫知其所以然而然。通其音者可以不設宮調，解其節者可以不立文字。[172]

Ling visualises *qu* as natural phenomenon manifested through the writer and singer, who are mere conduits. The composition and performance of *qu* is a means through which humans and nature are brought together: it is a way to channel the Dao. In a similar way to how Zhuangzi argues that once meaning is obtained, language can be forgotten,[173] Ling defines the essence of *qu* as "sound" and "rhythm", with the keys, modes and words being used to encase and transmit it analogous to the "fish traps" 筌 and "rabbit snares" 蹄 in Zhuangzi's metaphor that can be forgotten when their purpose is fulfilled.

However, the keys, modes, and words must be studied in order to reach the stage where the "natural sound" can flow. This idea also has its origins in Zhuangzi's philosophy, as Feng Baoshan has indicated, showing a close relationship to the stories

[172] Ling Mengchu, "*Nanyin san lai* xu" 《南音三籟》敘, *Nanyin san lai, LMCQJ* v.4, p.1.
[173] Zhuangzi, "Waiwu shisan" 外物十三, *Zhuangzi*, in Chen Guying ed., *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi*, p.773.

of Chef Ding 庖丁, Wheelwright Bian 輪扁, Woodworker Qing 梓慶, and the ferryman 津人.[174] Just as through repeated practice of a particular skill it is possible to become one with the Dao, thorough study of the key and mode system is necessary to produce the "natural sound". Though this scheme clearly relegates these formal rules to a secondary position, Ling does subsequently underline their continuing importance: his own *qu* also feature "particularly strict rhyming" 用韻尤嚴.[175]

In addition to expressing Ling's Daoist-influenced conception of *qu*, this passage also reveals his metaphysical conception of the fundamental nature of *qu* through the insistence that the natural sound and rhythm of a *qu* song "simply *is*". This neatly sidesteps the Confucian dichotomy of "moral substance" versus "art"[176] through the portrayal of *qu* as a quasi-natural phenomenon channelled through writer and singer.

The metaphysical, rather than practical, nature of *qu* in Ling's view of the genre is reflected in the way that the focus of "Tan qu zazha" is heavily weighted towards aesthetics, exploring what it is that makes a beautiful *qu*. Indeed, the entire premise of *Nanyin san lai* is aesthetic, with the main body of the work being taken up with rating and evaluating the artistic, not moral, merit of different drama songs. The potential or

[174] Feng Baoshan, *Ling Mengchu*, p.50.
[175] Zhang Chushu ed., *Wu sao hebian* j.4, p.76a.
[176] See p.170 for more detail.

otherwise of the genre to effect social change is not considered at all, nor is the broader issue of the practical influence that *qu* may have on the audience. Similar preoccupations are visible in the introductory notes to Ling's editions of *Pipa ji* 琵琶記 (The Lute) and *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (Romance of the Western Wing), which he uses as a platform for expressing his aesthetic beliefs and criticizing modifications of the original text.[177] This is despite the radically different relationships of these two plays to conventional morality; the opening statement in *Pipa ji* states that "if [drama] is not connected with matters of morality, even if it is good it is in vain" 不關風化事，縱好也徒然,[178] while *Xixiang ji* on the other hand would come to be regarded as "obscene language and sexual songs" 淫詞艷曲.[179]

In this absence of morality in his theories of *qu*, Ling is similar to the late Ming critics Wang Jide 王驥德 (d.1623) and He Liangjun 何良俊 (1506-1573). Wang Jide's *Qulü* 曲律 (Rules of *Qu*) lists forty "*qu* taboos" 曲禁, of which none are concerned with moral content or the effect on the audience more generally. He Liangjun is also largely silent on the matter in his *Qulun* 曲論 (On *Qu*), beyond a cursory mention of the old saying that "the Way of sound is connected to governance" 聲音之道，與政

[177] See Ling Mengchu, "*Pipa ji* fanli" 《琵琶記》凡例, in Gao Dongjia 高東嘉, *Pipa ji* 琵琶記, *LMCQJ* v.10, pp.22-23; Ling Mengchu, "*Xixiang ji* fanli" 《西廂記》凡例, in Wang Shifu 王實甫, *Xixiang ji* 西廂記, *LMCQJ* v.10, pp.1-3.
[178] Gao Dongjia, *Pipa ji* scene 1, in *LMCQJ* v.10, p.1.
[179] Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢, ch.23, p.320.

通矣.[180] Both of these critics share a concern with the technical side of writing *qu* and the importance of musical rules, perhaps reflecting the fact that many literati did not have a musical education.

The aesthetic and metaphysical conception of drama evident in *Nanyin san lai* was not shared by all critics of the time, however. The late Ming period also saw the development of "morality plays" 教化劇 such as *Wulun quanbei ji* 五倫全備記 (Record of the Five Complete Human Relations), which promoted conventional Confucian mores. In addition, "current affairs plays" 時事劇 such as *Mingfeng ji* 鳴鳳記 (Record of the Crying Phoenix) show drama being used to make specific political points.

As will be shown below, Ling's conception of drama as a purely aesthetic genre differs fundamentally from his conception of fiction. However, other aspects of his drama criticism are directly transposable to his fiction. Ling preferred the style of Yuan era drama, which "on the whole valued *danghang* 當行 (professionalism) and did not value ornateness" 大略貴當行，不貴藻麗.[181] The "professionalism" of which Ling speaks is intimately linked to performability and comprehensibility, and

[180] He Liangjun 何良俊, *Qulun* 曲論, in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* 中國古典戲曲論著集成 v.4, p.5.
[181] Ling Mengchu, "Tan qu zazha", *Nanyin san lai, LMCQJ* v.4, p.1.

is characterised by the quality of *bense* 本色 (original colour). These terms have a long history in Chinese literary criticism, and critics have defined them in a range of ways, with overall connotations of professionalism and plainness of language.

This is made clearer by a look at the origins of the terms: *danghang* meant that one was engaged in a certain trade, while *bense* was first used in connection to literature by the early critic Liu Xie 劉勰 (465?-522):[182]

> But the color blue is prepared from indigo and the color red is prepared from madder. And although blue and red are better colors than their sources [*bense*], they are incapable of further change…If one wishes to refine upon the blue and purify the red, one must return to the indigo and the madder and begin there; just so, to correct pretentiousness and cure superficiality, a writer must come back to the Classics and begin there.[183]

> 夫青生於藍，絳生於蒨，雖踰本色，不能復化……故練青濯絳，必歸藍蒨，矯訛翻淺，還宗經誥.[184]

[182] The term also referred to the clothing required to be worn by members of a certain trade in the Sui 隋 dynasty (581-618), which underlines its connotations of "professionality"; see Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程, *Shishi bense yu miaowu* 詩史本色與妙悟, pp.95-96.
[183] Shih, Vincent Yu-chung, trans., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p.268.
[184] Liu Xie 劉勰, "Tongbian di ershijiu" 通變第二十九, *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 j.6, p.397.

Liu Xie's use of the term links it firmly to an original plainness, in opposition to superficially alluring embellishment that was nonetheless stiff and inflexible. In Liu Xie's view, the "original colours" of "indigo" and "madder" are analogous to the Classics, and "any innovation [in writing] should not discard the basic quality of language established by the Classics".[185]

Liu Xie's general approach is one shared by Ling Mengchu: in Ling's case, the place of the "Classics" is taken by the Yuan dramatic works which shaped the genre and were intimately linked to the professional stage. Though in practice Ling's advocacy of *bense* and *danghang* often manifested itself in a preference for plain language, Ling bases his definitions of *danghang* and *bense*, on these Yuan works, and opposes departures from this model rather than ornate lyrics *per se*. Thus, ornate parallel prose descriptions are defended, since they appear in older works, and language that is so plain as to be "vulgar" is criticised and excluded from this definition, since the Yuan works managed to be linguistically plain without being vulgar. The importance Ling placed on being faithful to what he saw as the origins of the genre is key in understanding the importance of entertainment and didacticism in his fiction.

[185] Jing, Shen, "The concept of *bense* in Ming drama criticism", p.2.

Ling's theories, based on adherence to historical generic norms, may seem somewhat reactionary in nature, constituted in opposition to the trends of the day. This is certainly true to some extent, and is evident in the way that a large portion of "Tan qu zazha" is dedicated to trenchant criticism of people and ideas he does not agree with. However, there are also deeper concerns underlying his outlook, as shown here:

> In the most extreme cases, obscure references are used, opaque wording is deployed, the words require mounds of explanations, and the meaning must be guessed at like a riddle. Not only is a type of authentic language of the *qu* composer obliterated without trace, but a type of speech of humanity's true feelings is buried and hidden.
>
> 甚者使僻事，繪隱語，詞須累詮，意如商謎，不唯曲家一種本色語抹盡無餘，即人間一種真情話，埋沒不露已。[186]

Coexisting with the attack on the disadvantages of difficult language is a philosophical justification for plain yet non-vulgar *bense* language in the style of the Yuan playwrights: it is the best way to express true feelings that may otherwise be buried under a mass of allusions. This outlook shows strong parallels with the "childlike mind" theory 童心說 of the heterodox thinker Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602),

[186] Ling Mengchu, "Tan qu zazha", *Nanyin san lai, LMCQJ* v.4., p.1.

which reacted against what he saw as hypocrisy by advocating a childlike, simple authenticity.[187] Meanwhile, it also resonates with the Daoist idea, hinted at in the preface, that meaning is more important than words. Ling's inclination towards "*bense*" plain language has a philosophical basis over and above his preference for adherence to established generic norms. The philosophical interest in plain language expressed here has obvious relevance to Ling's work in creating fiction in the vernacular.

Ling's ideas on drama are reflected in the plots of his stories as well as the language they are written in. In "Tan qu zazha", Ling takes aim at the increasing use of supernatural plot elements in the plays of the day, which he says lead to "the performers' hands panicking and their feet falling into chaos, while the eyes of the audience blur and their heads swim" 演者手忙腳亂，觀者眼暗頭昏.[188] It is made clear here, moreover, that Ling does not object to supernatural elements in of themselves, but rather just their overuse,[189] a fact that provides a theoretical basis for the occasional supernatural happenings in *Erpai*.[190] This ambivalent attitude to the supernatural is also expressed in the preface to *Pai'an jingqi*.

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[187] See Li Zhi 李贄, "Tongxin shuo" 童心說, *Fen shu* j.3, *Li Zhi wenji* v.1, p.91-93; Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*, p.808-811.
[188] Ling Mengchu, "Tan qu zazha", *Nanyin san lai, LMCQJ* v.4., p.4.
[189] Ibid.
[190] See Chapter Four, p.294 for more on Ling's views on the supernatural.

Fiction

The best expressions of Ling Mengchu's theories of fiction are the prefaces and *fanli* remarks to the *Pai'an jingqi* collections. The preface to the first collection is made up of three sections. Significantly, the first of these is taken up with a discourse on the nature of *qi* 奇 or the extraordinary. This mirrors the emphasis on *qi* seen in the titles of the collections, which serves to highlight the entertainment value of the stories. In the prefaces, Ling explores the concept of *qi*, concluding that the extraordinary can be found in everyday life. The argument is illustrated with Ling's characteristic humour:

> There is a saying that goes "The less things one has seen, the more things one thinks strange". The people of today only know that things beyond their ken, such as ox demons and snake spirits, are extraordinary. They know not that there are actually many things within eyeshot and earshot, in daily life, that are weird and bizarre, and cannot be fathomed with normal logic. In the past, Chinese people went to other lands, and were surprised that [the inhabitants used] cowpats as money. Thereupon, one of them asked what was different in China. The Chinese people said in reply, 'There is a wriggling insect that spits out coloured silk and fine brocade, which clothes all under Heaven'. Their tongues fell out, unbelieving, but this was not something that Chinese people considered extraordinary. Therefore, the saying that one must

go beyond the range of one's eye's and ears to search for the weird and bizarre in order to create the extraordinary is superfluous.

語有之：“少所見，多所怪。”今之人，但知耳目之外，牛鬼蛇神之為奇，而不知耳目之內，日用起居，其為詭譎幻怪非可以常理測者固多也。昔華人至異域，異域咤以牛糞金；隨詰華之異者，則曰：“有蟲蠕蠕，而吐為彩繒錦綺，衣被天下。”彼舌撟而不信，乃華人未之或奇也。則所謂必向耳目之外，索詭譎幻怪以為奇，贅矣。[191]

That Ling places this argument in such a prominent position shows the importance he attached to the entertainment value of the work, which depends to a great extent on the extraordinary happenings he describes. The light tone employed serves to highlight the entertaining character of the works, while justifying Ling's aesthetic choices.

In the second section, Ling moves on to a new topic, and brings didactic intent into the discussion:

In Song and Yuan times, there was one type of fiction author that collected many novel events from the alleyways in order to provide material to talk about in the court. The language was

[191] Ling Mengchu, "Xu", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.

mostly simple to understand, and the intention was to persuade and admonish. Although it was no school of broad-ranging elegance, it must be appreciated as a minor art. In recent times, peace has reigned for a long time, and the people are lost and their ambitions degenerate. One or two shallow foul youths think of slandering the world and carry out indiscriminate malicious invention as soon as they learn to hold a brush. If [their works] are not ridiculous and unbelievable, they are so obscene one can hardly bear to hear them. They offend the famous teachings, and plant sins for future lives: there is nothing more egregious. Moreover, paper is expensive, and [these works] fly without wings and walk without limbs. It is appropriate that those with understanding issued a proclamation banning [these works] out of consideration for the morals of the world.

宋元時，有小說家一種，多採閭巷新事，為宮闈應承談資，語多俚近，意存勸諷。雖非博雅之派，要以小道可觀。近世承平日久，民佚志淫，一二輕薄惡少，初學拈筆，便思污衊世界，廣摭誣造，非荒誕不足信，則褻穢不忍聞。得罪名教，種業來生，莫此為甚。而且紙為之貴，無翼飛，不脛走，有識者為世道慮之，以功令厲禁，宜其然也。[192]

In this passage, Ling establishes a paradigm for the genre that is rooted in the past and imbued with the power of authenticity, within which he can then situate his own

[192] Ibid.

work. The didactic intention of the Song and Yuan writers is highlighted. The parallel structure of the sentence implies that didactic intent is a desirable feature on a level with simple language and entertainment, here glossed as "material to talk about"; Ling gives equal weight to the aesthetic and didactic aspects of the genre. Significantly, the reference to the writers of previous dynasties implies that Ling sees these three features (plain language, entertainment, and didacticism) as representing the *bense* of the vernacular story. Given the importance Ling attaches to fidelity to the *bense* of a genre, this demonstrates that the functional effects of entertainment and didacticism are also key to his own short stories.

The inclusion of didactic value in the *bense* of the genre also allows Ling to attack the "shallow foul youths" who have departed from this model and thus cannot represent the true character of the genre, setting up a negative example against which *Erpai* can distinguish itself. This distinction serves the dual purpose of mounting a pre-emptive defence against those who may criticise *Erpai* for its erotic content, while also denigrating Ling's rivals in a competitive marketplace. Ling seems to have thought that he won this particular contest. In the preface to the second collection, he makes a rather more subtle dig at his competitors by using the phrase "fly without wings and

walk without limbs" 無翼飛，不脛走 again: this time to describe the commercial success of his own collection.[193]

The third section introduces the books of Feng Menglong, praising the way that they "contain much of the way of elegance, often highlight good guidelines, and in one blow break the poor habits of today" 頗存雅道，時著良規, 一破今時陋習.[194] This shows the respect that Ling had for Feng's works, and hints at the inspiration he gained from the *Sanyan* collections. The praise is largely concerned with the didactic effect that the books have on their audience, revealing the importance Ling attached to such considerations.

The next part of the preface turns the focus onto his own works. He discusses the creative process, describing how book merchants believed that he possessed other, unpublished, Song/Yuan *huaben*. He did not, but did not let this stop him:

> Thereupon [I] collected miscellaneous matters from past and present that could refresh the ears and eyes, or assist humorous banter, and elaborated them so that several *juan* volumes were obtained.

[193] Ling Mengchu, "*Erke Pai'an jingqi* xiaoyin", *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.3.
[194] Ling Mengchu, "Xu", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.

因取古今來雜碎事，可新聽睹、佐詼諧者，演而暢之，得若干卷。[195]

This account of the creative process moves the focus back to entertainment from didacticism, with its description of stories that could "assist humorous banter". The description of the background to the work given in the preface to the second collection is similar, though the role of book merchants in the genesis of both collections is emphasised more heavily, and we are told that the works were written after examination failure, providing a limited insight into Ling's personal condition at the time he was writing.

After stressing the entertainment motivation behind his own collections, Ling then moves on to underlining his didactic intent. In the prefaces to both collections, and the introductory notes, he insists on a current of moral didacticism running through the works. The preface to the second collection says it clearest:

> In amongst it [the collection], it speaks of ghosts and talks of dreams, and [there are matters] both genuine and ridiculous. However the intention is to encourage and warn, and not be a criminal to decent taste. From start to finish, this has been the sole guide.

[195] Ibid.

其間說鬼說夢，亦真亦誕，然意存勸戒，不爲風雅罪人，後先一指也。[196]

Two of the introductory remarks to the first collection make a similar point, using very similar phrasing:

> This collection is primarily about persuasion and warning. Therefore, [I have] made repeated efforts at this within every story. The reader will pick this up for themselves, and I cannot mark each instance individually.

是編主于勸戒，故每回之中，三致意焉，觀者自得之，不能一一標出。[197]

and

> This collection swears not to be a criminal to decent taste. Therefore, although there are by no means no words related to romance in each story, they stop at making the existence of the matter known, using a few words to cover it; the reader then understand themselves. I definitely do not employ vulgar and obscene expressions. These harm morals and one's original *qi*. This comes from what is natural about writing and the way of elegance, and is not a concession to rotten Confucian studies.

[196] Ling Mengchu, "*Erke Pai'an jingqi* xiaoyin", *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.3.
[197] Ling Mengchu, "Fanli" 凡例, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.2.

是編矢不爲風雅罪人，故回中非無語涉風情，然止存其事之有者蘊藉數語，人自了了，絕不作肉麻穢口，傷風化，損元氣。此自筆墨雅道當然，非迂腐道學態也。[198]

Two phrases from the notes to the first collection, "persuade and warn" 勸戒 and "not being a criminal to decent taste" 不爲風雅罪人, are repeated in Ling's preface to the second, suggesting that these denote key concerns. These passages develop his strategy of assuming the mantle of the "Song/Yuan" writers (who also "persuade and admonish") and denigrating contemporary competitors (who are "criminals to decent taste") by their explicit association of *Erpai* with the former and opposition to the latter.

These two phrases represent the active and passive aspects of moralism; one attempting to improve the reader, the other preventing the work from harming their morals. While both aspects imply a healthy respect for the power of the effects that fiction can have on the reader (if a book has the ability to harm morals, it logically must also have the ability to improve them), it appears that Ling's interest in not being a "criminal to decent taste" outweighs his concern for "persuasion and warning". Ling does not explore the possibilities of fiction as a medium to "encourage and warn" at all; he merely observes that that is what "Song/Yuan"

[198] Ibid.

fiction does, and states that it is what his own fiction aims to do. In contrast, Ling dedicates a large portion of his preface to describing and criticising "criminals to decent taste" in vivid detail; the introductory note on this topic is also over twice as long as that on "persuasion and warning".

On another level, the preoccupation with not being a "criminal to decent taste" can also be seen as a statement of the limits of how far he is prepared to go in the name of entertainment. As shown in Chapter Four, increased eroticism is one of the most common ways in which the entertainment value of the stories is enhanced; the repeated mention of a moral "bottom line" shows not only that he was very much concerned that his pursuit of entertainment should not lead to adverse moral effects, but also that he was anxious that others should know that his delight in eroticism was tempered by an interest in morality. In this way, the phrase "not being a criminal to decent taste" can be read as a statement of the way in which Ling balanced the sometimes contradictory demands of didacticism and entertainment.

Of course, these paratextual materials do not tell the whole story. For example, quantitative analysis shows that didactic language accounts for around a quarter of the total length of both collections, significantly more than the amount found in Feng

Menglong's books.[199] It is plain that Ling's efforts in this area are greater than the brief mention he gives to "persuasion and warning" in the prefatory materials might suggest.[200] Moreover, these prefatory materials do not mention the political side of his didactic efforts, but the analysis in Chapter Three will show that it forms an important part of the works.

This being the case, however, it is evident from the prefaces that Ling viewed both didacticism and entertainment as equally significant characteristics of *huaben* fiction. The focus of the prefaces swings from entertainment to didacticism and back again, first highlighting their importance in the vernacular fiction that preceded him and then underlying their key role in his own work. The claim that entertainment and didacticism made up the *bense* of the genre as established by Song and Yuan writers demonstrates the root cause of the importance of these features to *Erpai*: as expressed in his drama criticism, fidelity to original models was one of Ling's key concerns. This concern spanned generic divides, as the preface to *Shengmen zhuan Shi dizhong*, which tells of the delight he felt at clearing up questions he had about the *Shi jing* caused by modifications of the text, shows.[201] It therefore follows that the

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[199] Zhou Kai 周凱, "Ling Mengchu xiaoshuo chuangzuo zhidao sixiang (xiaoshuoguan) yanjiu" 凌濛初小說創作指導思想（小說觀）研究, p.23.
[200] See Chapter Three, p.219 for examples.
[201] Ling Mengchu, "*Shengmen zhuan Shi dizhong* xu" 《聖門傳詩嫡冢》序, *Shengmen zhuan Shi dizhong* 聖門傳詩嫡冢, *LMCQJ* v.1, p.1.

combination of didacticism and entertainment, as a way of embodying this fidelity in *huaben* fiction, was crucial to his own contribution to the genre. Viewing the importance of entertainment and didacticism in terms of the *bense* of the genre also makes it clear that both functions are equally important, as both were equally part of the *bense* of vernacular fiction.

Though there are crossovers between Ling's drama and fiction theories in terms of the importance of plain language and an ambivalent attitude to the supernatural, he saw the two genres as being fundamentally different in their origin and purpose: while the *qu* in drama are a manifestation of a semi-natural force originating in the sublime, fiction comes out of the far more mundane circumstances of commercial publishing and idle amusement. The effect of *qu* is purely aesthetic, while fiction should both amuse and be beneficial to society. Put another way, on a generic level *qu* have a certain otherworldly magic to them, while fiction is "this-worldly", situated firmly within the human world. Functional effect, as part of the *bense* of the genre, was fundamental to Ling's conception of fiction.

Literature review

The popularity the collections reached in the Ming period continues to the present day, with the collections being regarded as representative works of late Ming fiction.

However, they remain somewhat in the shadow of Feng's works. Hanan compares his depiction of thought processes unfavourably with Feng,[202] while Sun Kaidi goes further, saying that most of the stories are "clumsy interpretations" 蹇拙之繙譯 and they are "inferior" to Feng Menglong's works 以視《三言》，不免有遜色.[203] Meanwhile, Robert Hegel's *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China* praises Feng Menglong for bringing the short story to "perfection" with "outstanding new pieces", with Ling's contribution merely noted in terms of numbers. [204]

In addition to being overshadowed by *Sanyan*, the moral and ideological criticism of the *Erpai* collections evident in the Qing dynasty bans continued into the 20th century. Many scholars temper their studies of the works with mention of undesirable "feudalistic dregs" 封建糟粕, and nebulous "negative influences" 負面影響.[205] The more explicit scenes were excised from reprinted editions, actions supported by certain scholars.[206] Hu Shiying even went as far as to say that most of the stories should not be allowed to circulate further and should only be read for research

[202] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.152.
[203] Sun Kaidi, "*Sanyan-Erpai* yuanliu kao", p.130.
[204] Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth Century China*, p.x-xi.
[205] For example, Xu Jingqian 徐靜茜, "*Liangpai* suojian fangyan ciyu ji jushi"《两拍》所见方言词语及句式, p.6; Li Guikui, "Lun *Erpai* chuangzuo de shichang jingji yishi", p.55.
[206] Chen Yongzheng 陳永正 sympathises with the publishers in question; Xie Taofang 謝桃坊 suggests that it was correct for *Pai'an jingqi* to be banned in the Qing, complaining about how the work "praises disgusting and perverted male homosexual preferences" 歌頌醜惡的變態的男風好尚. Chen Yongzheng 陳永正, *Sanyan-Erpai de shijie*《三言》、《二拍》的世界, p.14; Xie Taofang 謝桃坊, "Zhongguo jindai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu de deshi" 中國近代禁毀小說戲曲的得失, p.37.

purposes, lest their influence prove corrosive to society.[207] While such attitudes are now, unlike in the Qing dynasty, pleasingly irrelevant to the stories' continued circulation and enjoyment, the fact that the sex scenes in the collection could make critics "feel like vomiting" 作嘔[208] several hundred years later does serve as a type of reverse testament to the power of Ling's erotic writing skills. More seriously, the overall tendency to view the erotic passages in the works as a defect has meant that their importance in making the stories entertaining has been overlooked.

Fortunately, despite this steady feed of criticism, a relatively large body of scholarship has built up around *Erpai*. Selected works will be introduced below in themed sections. This will focus on works specialising in *Erpai*, or *Erpai* and *Sanyan* in tandem; other works with specific relevance to particular chapters will be examined in the appropriate chapter.

General studies

A number of scholars have contributed general overviews of Ling Mengchu and *Erpai*. Books such as Feng Baoshan's *Ling Mengchu* 凌濛初 (Ling Mengchu), Patrick Hanan's *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, Ma Meixin's *Ling Mengchu he Erpai* 凌濛初和《二拍》 (Ling Mengchu and *Erpai*), Zhang Bing's *Ling Mengchu yu*

[207] Hu Shiying, *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun*, p.598.
[208] Ibid., p.587.

Liangpai 凌濛初與《兩拍》 (Ling Mengchu and *Liangpai*), and Xu Dingbao's 徐定寶 *Ling Mengchu yanjiu* 凌濛初研究 (Research into Ling Mengchu) all give an overview of Ling's life and works. Patrick Hanan has also written a chapter-length study of Ling Mengchu as part of *The Chinese Vernacular Story*.

Biographical studies

The earliest academic chronicle of Ling's life was Ye Dejun's abovementioned article "Ling Mengchu shiji xinian" in 1947, based largely on his epitaph. Zhao Hongjuan's 趙紅娟 book *Pai'an jingqi: Ling Mengchu zhuan* 拍案驚奇: 凌濛初傳 (Slapping the Table in Amazement: a Biography of Ling Mengchu) is the most in-depth study of Ling's life, the books mentioned under the General Studies heading above all include a biography. Lenny Hu's extended introduction to his translations of some erotic stories from *Erpai*, *In the Inner Quarters*, also gives an overview of Ling's life. The *Dictionary of Ming Biography* praises his achievements in the field of the short story.[209] Scholars including Feng Baoshan, Zhao Hongjuan, Xu Yongbin 徐永斌, and Jia Sanqiang 賈三強 have also published articles aimed at verifying more detailed matters, including the exact date of Ling's death, the events surrounding it and his alternative *zi*.

[209] Goodrich, ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography,* pp.930-931.

Another area of biographical research involves the gradual piecing together of Ling's circle of friends and acquaintances. Feng Baoshan, Zheng Zhiliang 鄭志良, and Zhao Hongjuan have all made notable contributions to this area, as already mentioned in the section introducing Ling's friendships above. The circle of Ling's known acquaintances is gradually growing as more materials are found and pieced together.

Bibliographical research

Despite the collections' popularity in Qing China, this had waned for a time by the 20th century. In the early part of the century, Sun Kaidi catalogued the existence of the texts that he had seen in libraries in Japan.[210] Wang Gulu 王古魯 and Zhang Peiheng later played a key role in collaboration with Japanese scholars in finding texts held in Japan, copying them, and arranging and reprinting them in Mainland China. Outside of this vital task, the main debate around the editions of the collections has been the significance of the altered *banxin* inscriptions in certain chapters of *Erke pai'an jingqi* and whether this means that there was a third collection entitled *Erxu pai'an jingqi*. This is covered in more detail on page 55 above.

Linguistic studies

[210] Sun Kaidi, *Riben Dongjing, Dalian tushuguan suojian Zhongguo xiaoshuo shumu tiyao* 日本東京、大連圖書館所見中國小說書目提要.

Being written in the vernacular, *Erpai* is a valuable resource for examining early vernacular Chinese, and there are many studies on this topic. Perhaps the most relevant to this study is Xu Jingqian's 徐靜茜 "*Liangpai* suojian fangyan ciyu ji jushi" 兩拍所見方言詞語及句式 (Dialect words and sentence patterns seen in *Liangpai*), which focuses on the occurrences of Wu dialect in the stories and forms the basis of the section on regional language in Chapter Two. Other works include Zhou Lu's 周璐 study of passive forms in the stories, which concludes that *Erpai* reflects the state of late Ming language more accurately than *Sanyan*.[211]

Transmission and influence

Cheng Guofu's work *Sanyan-Erpai chuanbo yanjiu* 《三言》、《二拍》傳播研究 (Research on the Transmission of *Sanyan-Erpai*), cited in the section on reception and transmission above, is the most comprehensive study in this area, methodically charting how the stories from the collections were passed on, anthologised, adapted, and banned after their publication. In addition to this, Yang Lin 楊琳 has written on how Li Yu took on and developed aspects of Ling's works such as the prominence of authorial self-consciousness and the notion that the extraordinary can be found in everyday life.[212]

[211] Zhou Lu 周璐, "*Erpai* zhong de beidong jushi yanjiu" 《二拍》中的被動句式研究, p.33
[212] Yang Lin 楊琳, "Nihuaben: cong Ling Mengchu dao Li Yu" 擬話本: 從凌濛初到李漁.

Background and motivation behind the stories

Research has also been performed into Ling's motivations for writing the stories, and in general suggests three basic answers to this question: 1) to spread his didactic message; 2) commercial reasons; 3) to express his feelings of frustration. However, scholars differ in the weight they ascribe to specific reasons. For example, Fu Chengzhou 傅乘洲 concludes that Ling's main motivations are didacticism and expressing his frustration, placing less emphasis on commercial motivations.[213] Zhou Kai 周凱 regards entertainment as the primary purpose of the work, taking precedent over didacticism.[214] Wang Huawen 王化文 and Sun Haixia 孫海霞 identify four reasons (approval of the literary value of the *huaben* form, didacticism, moderating a trend towards eroticism in literature, and expressing his frustration) in addition to commercial motivation, which is given only a brief mention.[215] This commercial motivation is focused on in greater depth by Li Guikui 李桂奎, who privileges the role played by external market forces both in *Erpai*[216] and, in partnership with Liu Tingqian 劉廷乾,[217] the huaben genre more generally.

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[213] Fu Chengzhou 傅乘洲, "Cong *Erpai* ruhua kan Ling Mengchu de chuangzuo xintai" 從《二拍》入話看凌濛初的創作心態.
[214] Zhou Kai, "Ling Mengchu xiaoshuo chuangzuo zhidao sixiang (xiaoshuoguan) yanjiu.
[215] Wang Huawen 王化文 and Sun Haixia 孫海霞, "Ling Mengchu *Pai'an jingqi* chuangzuo sixiang chutan" 凌濛初《拍案驚奇》創作思想初探.
[216] Li Guikui, "Lun *Erpai* chuangzuo de shichang jingji yishi".
[217] Li Guikui and Liu Tingqian 劉廷乾, "Lun huaben xiaoshuo chuangzuo de 'waiyili' he 'xingshiguan'" 論話本小說創作的'外役力'和'行世觀'.

Analysis of portrayals of certain character types

Perhaps the most well-researched area of *Erpai* is that concerned with analysing the portrayals of various character types. Within this field, most attention has been paid to the portrayal of merchants in the stories; scholars such as Wang Juqin 王菊芹,[218] Zhang Rong 張蓉 and Wang Feng 王鋒,[219] Xu Dingbao,[220] Han Ya'nan 韓亞楠,[221] and Hu Xin 胡欣,[222] among others, have all tackled this issue. A common theme of these articles is that merchants and trading are treated with greater importance in *Sanyan* and *Erpai* than in the traditional Confucian worldview, reflecting social trends of the late Ming. Wang Zhizhong 王枝忠 compares *Sanyan* with *Erpai* and discovers that *Erpai* is more likely to depict major merchants than *Sanyan*, which tends to show minor merchants. In addition, in stories charting a character's success, *Erpai* tends towards depicting a character becoming wealthy, while *Sanyan* generally

[218] Wang Juqin 王菊芹, "Cong *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de shangren xingxiang kan Ming dai zhonghouqi jingshang yishi de xinbian" 從《三言》、《二拍》中的商人形象看明代中後期經商意識的新變; "Lun shangpin jingji fazhan dui wenxue zhong shangren xingxiang de yingxiang: du *Sanyan-Erpai*" 論商品經濟發展對文學中商人形象的影響——讀《三言》、《二拍》.

[219] Zhang Rong 張蓉 and Wang Feng 王鋒, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong shangren xingxiang de shanbian ji qi yuanyin"《三言》《二拍》中商人形象的嬗變及其原因.

[220] Xu Dingbao 徐定寶, "Lun *Erpai* zhong de shanggu xingxiang: jianlun wan Ming shehui jiazhiguan yu geti renshengguan de bianyi" 論《二拍》中的商賈形象: 兼論晚明社會價值觀與個體人生觀的變易.

[221] Han Ya'nan 韓亞楠, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong shangren xingxiang de xin'gou"《三言》、《二拍》中商人形象的新構.

[222] Hu Xin 胡欣, "Chuantong jiazhiguan yiyong hou de xin shangren xingxiang: tan *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong shangren xingxiang de xin tedian" 傳統價值觀移用後的新商人形象——談《三言》、《二拍》中商人形象的新特點.

shows characters' success in the Imperial exam system.[223] Guo Xiulan 郭秀蘭 analyses how certain merchant characters show Confucian virtues more traditionally associated with the scholar class, terming them "Confucian traders" 儒商.[224] This crossover works both ways: for example, Zhu Quanfu 朱全福 and Lu Yumiao 蘆宇苗 concentrate on the materialistic, greedy, and lustful side of the officials in the stories, concluding that these reflect the corruption of late Ming officialdom.[225] Lu Jie 盧捷, meanwhile, looks at how Ling's own ambitions are reflected through depictions of talented scholars overcoming adversity.[226]

The portrayal of monks and nuns is analysed by Liu Xiangqun 劉向群, who concludes that although there are three discernable types of monk- "good", "evil", and "wise", the majority of nuns that appear in the stories are "evil".[227] It is worth noting that Liu's analysis covers *Sanyan* as well as *Erpai*; depictions in *Erpai* are notably less complimentary on the whole than those in *Sanyan*. Other character types

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[223] Wang Zhizhong 王枝忠, "Ling Mengchu de xin gongxian: *Erpai* pingyi" 凌濛初的新貢獻:《二拍》平議.

[224] Guo Xiulan 郭秀蘭, "Qiantan *Erpai* zhong de rushang xingxiang" 淺談《二拍》中的儒商形象.

[225] Zhu Quanfu 朱全福, "Wenren qinghuai, langzi fengliu yu shisu qixi: tan *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de shiren xingxiang" 文人情懷、浪子風流與世俗氣息: 談《三言》、《二拍》中的士人形象; Lu Yumiao 蘆宇苗, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de jiansheng xingxiang tanxi" 《三言》、《二拍》中的監生形象探析.

[226] Lu Jie 盧捷, "Luopo wenren chulu de lixiang tansuo: lüe lun *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de xiucai xingxiang" 落魄文人出路的理想探索: 略論《三言》、《二拍》中的秀才形象.

[227] Liu Xiangqun 劉向群, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong seng ni xingxiang fenxi"《三言》、《二拍》中僧尼形象分析.

analysed in this way are "chivalrous bandits" 俠盜,[228] matchmakers,[229] teachers,[230] women,[231] and men.[232]

Analysis of late Ming society as reflected in *Erpai*

A common thread connecting the majority of the works on character portrayal mentioned above is the use of the character types as a key to reveal aspects of late-Ming social life, in particular that of the urban marketplace (*shijing* 市井). This approach is taken by other works on a broader scale, including Liu Liangming 劉良明 and Liu Fang's 劉方 *Shijing minfeng: Erpai yu minsu wenhua* 市井民風：《二拍》與民俗文化 (The Folk Style of the Urban Market: *Erpai* and Folk Culture), Chen Yongzheng's *Sanyan-Erpai de shijie* 《三言》、《二拍》的世界 (The World of *Sanyan-Erpai*), a collection of short essays on cultural phenomena found in the

[228] Ji Dejun 紀德君, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de xiadao xingxiang"《三言》、《二拍》中的俠盜形象.
[229] Zhu Quanfu, "Lun *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de meipo xingxiang" 論《三言》、《二拍》中的媒婆形象; Ji Dejun, "Lüe tan *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de meishuo xingxiang" 略談《三言》、《二拍》中的媒妁形象.
[230] Cao Lihong 曹立紅, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de jiaoshi xingxiang"《三言》、《二拍》中的教師形象.
[231] Cao Yibing 曹亦冰, "Cong *Erpai* de nüxing xingxiang kan Ming dai houqi nüxing wenhua de yanbian" 從《二拍》的女性形象看明代後期女性文化的演變; Zhang Jinfeng 張金鳳, "Qian tan *Erpai* zhong nüxing xingxiang suozao de jiji yiyi" 淺談《二拍》中女性形象塑造的積極意義; Deng Shengguo 鄧聲國, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de nüxing xingxiang tanxi"《三言》、《二拍》中的女性形象探析.
[232] Yan Wei 閻瑋, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhuyao nanxing xingxiang guankui"《三言》、《二拍》主要男性形象管窺; Shen Jinhao 沈金浩, "Lun *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de meinanzi xingxiang" 論《三言》、《二拍》中的美男子形象.

stories,[233] and Han Tianlu's 韓田鹿 book *Sanyan-Erpai kan Ming chao*《三言》、《二拍》看明朝 (Viewing the Ming Dynasty Through *Sanyan-Erpai*), based on a CCTV lecture series.[234] Many authors also have focused on the works as products of late Ming urban trading society, such as Mao Defu 毛德富.[235] This perspective often ascribes the works a "progressive" significance. For example, Zhang Zhenjun 張振鈞 and Mao Defu's *Jingu yu chaoyue: cong Sanyan-Liangpai kan Zhongguo shimin xintai* 禁錮與超越：從《三言》、《兩拍》看中國市民心態 (Shackles and Overcoming: Viewing the Attitudes of Chinese Urbanites through *Sanyan-Liangpai*) holds that the love stories are progressive due to depictions of love breaking through "feudal" codes of propriety.[236] Tian Gansheng 田干生 takes a similar line, holding that certain stories show an "irrepressible democratic essence" 掩不住的民主性精華.[237]

Love and sex

The latter two studies both focus on love stories, another popular area of research on *Erpai*. Yang Hua 楊華 links the descriptions of sex both with late Ming thinkers such

[233] Chen Yongzheng, *Sanyan-Erpai de shijie*.
[234] Han Tianlu 韓田鹿, *Sanyan-Erpai kan Ming chao*《三言》、《二拍》看明朝.
[235] Mao Defu 毛德富, "Cong Ming dai shimin xiaoshuo kan shimin jieceng de shisu qinghuai" 從明代市民小說看市民階層的世俗情懷.
[236] Zhang Zhenjun 張振鈞 and Mao Defu, *Jingu yu chaoyue: cong Sanyan-Liangpai kan Zhongguo shimin xintai* 禁錮與超越：從《三言》、《兩拍》看中國市民心態.
[237] Tian Gansheng 田干生, "Yanbuzhu de minzhuxing jinghua: dui *Erpai* hunyin aiqing miaoxie de zai pingjia" 掩不住的民主性精華: 對《二拍》婚姻愛情描寫的再評價.

as Li Zhi and an attempt to cater to the vulgar aesthetic tastes of the masses.[238] Liu Yanqing 劉衍青, meanwhile, identifies a duality in Ling's views on sex, in which conservatism coexists with a rejection of the Neo-Confucian denial of human desire.[239] However, the most thorough examination of sex in *Erpai* is provided by Lenny Hu in his introduction to his translations of some of the erotic stories from *Erpai*. Hu's work focuses more on the erotic episodes themselves rather than their causes or what they reflect, and finds that female "obsession with lust and amorous adventurousness features in almost all of Ling's erotic stories".[240] This "adventurousness" is evident in the variety of sexual practices found in the stories, which range from swinging to group sex, lesbianism, and voyeurism. However, Ling is simultaneously somewhat restrained when writing about sex: he often uses verse to refer to sex acts obliquely. Meanwhile, explicit and "obscene" words common in other erotic fiction of the period are avoided. This leads Hu to define Ling's erotic stories as not "*pure* erotic stories, but erotic stories that are *moralized*" [emphasis in original].[241]

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[238] Yang Hua 楊華, "Qianxi yingxiang *Erpai* xing'ai miaoxie de yinsu" 淺析影響《二拍》性愛描寫的因素.

[239] Liu Yanqing 劉衍青, "Shilun Ling Mengchu xing'aiguan de eryuanxing" 試論凌濛初性愛觀的二元性.

[240] Hu, Lenny, "Introduction", *In the Inner Quarters: Erotic Stories from Ling Mengchu's Two Slaps,* p.37.

[241] Ibid., p.58.

Ling's outlooks

Another area of research uses the stories to reconstruct aspects of Ling's worldview and value system, such as in the work by Liu Yanqing cited above. Closely related to that study are a group of studies examining the view of love and marriage expressed in the stories. Scholars such as Li Junfeng 李軍鋒,[242] Feng Xiaoqin 馮曉琴,[243] and Lin Nana 林娜娜[244] are all in broad agreement that Feng and Ling had a "liberal" view of love influenced by late Ming philosophical trends and the rise of a capitalist economy; Lü Te 呂特 and Wang Hongtai 王鴻泰, meanwhile, moderate this view, holding that the conflict between "love" and "propriety" is not a zero-sum game, but rather a process of mutual adjustment and compromise: while the authors place great importance on feeling, they also emphasise that this must be moderated by moral standards.[245] This general pattern is mirrored in works that examine views of women: Li Gang 李剛,[246] Dong Xiaoling 董曉玲 and Shi Yang 施暘,[247] and Huang Huanxin

[242] Li Junfeng 李軍鋒, "*Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de aiqing/hunyin guan ji qi wenhua yiyun"《三言》、《二拍》中的愛情婚姻觀及其文化意蘊.

[243] Feng Xiaoqin 馮曉琴, "Cong *Sanyan-Erpai* kan Ming dai wenren de aiqing/hunyin guan" 從《三言》、《二拍》看明代文人的愛情婚姻觀.

[244] Lin Nana 林娜娜, "Chong po jinyu de fanli: lun *Sanyan-Erpai* de qingyuguan" 衝破禁欲的樊籬: 論《三言》、《二拍》的情欲觀.

[245] Lü Te 呂特, "Lun *Sanyan-Erpai* de qing'aiguan" 論《三言》、《二拍》的情愛觀; Wang Hongtai 王鴻泰, *Sanyan-Liangpai de jingshenshi yanjiu*《三言》、《兩拍》的精神史研究.

[246] Li Gang 李剛, "Xiji yu huangkong: lun *Sanyan-Erpai* de nüxingguan" 希冀與惶恐: 論《三言》、《二拍》的女性觀.

[247] Dong Xiaoling 董曉玲 and Shi Yang 施暘, "*Sanyan-Erpai* nüxing zhenjieguan de huanyuan kaocha"《三言》、《二拍》女性貞節觀的還原考察.

黃煥新[248] agree that the authors of *Sanyan* and *Erpai* were more progressive in their outlook than the established Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, but that this progressiveness was limited and selective. However, Gao Huijuan 高惠娟[249] and Cai Xiaoqin 蔡曉琴[250] both regard Ling as having a progressive outlook on women in general.

The tension between the ideas of late Ming thinkers such as Li Zhi and Confucian orthodoxy visible in the works also plays out in the authors' view of money and material desires. Wang Yanfeng 王言鋒,[251] Shen Jinhao 沈金浩,[252] and Song Kefu 宋克夫 and Shu Dan 舒丹[253] have all, with differing perspectives, identified that while Ling and Feng placed more importance on money and material desires than Confucian orthodoxy, being willing to accept reasonable desires of this type, the influence of tradition is also visible in their criticism of the negative effects of such phenomena. Shen Jinhao also sees similar forces at work in the way that while official families are still seen as being of higher status than merchant families, Feng

[248] Huang Huanxin 黃煥新, "Cong *Sanyan-Erpai* kan zuozhe de funüguan" 從《三言》、《二拍》看作者的婦女觀.
[249] Gao Huijuan 高惠娟, "Cong *Erpai* zhong de nüxing kan Ling Mengchu de nüxingguan" 從《二拍》中的女性看凌濛初的女性觀.
[250] Cai Xiaoqin 蔡曉琴, "Qianxi *Erpai* nüxingguan" 淺析《二拍》女性觀.
[251] Wang Yanfeng 王言鋒, "Ming zhongye shangpin jingji fazhan yu *Sanyan-Erpai* de caifuguan" 明中葉商品經濟發展與《三言》、《二拍》的財富觀.
[252] Shen Jinhao, "Lun *Sanyan-Erpai* de qiancaiguan" 論《三言》、《二拍》的錢財觀.
[253] Song Kefu 宋克夫 and Shu Dan 舒丹, "Wuyu de zhengshi yu tanyu de kuangzheng: *Sanyan-Erpai* wuyuguan lunxi" 物欲的正視與貪欲的匡正：《三言》、《二拍》物欲觀論析.

and Ling are willing to recognise the existence of different opinions, and that certain merchant families were "good" by Confucian standards.[254]

Research on plot structure and narrative modes

In his history of the development of Chinese narrative, Zhang Yong 張勇 has identified that Ling Mengchu uses coincidence to a greater extent than Feng Menglong; this tallies with his attachment to the concept of *qi*.[255] Feng Ruilan 馮瑞蘭 characterises the narration in *Erpai* as a combination of the *huaben* narrative model with influences from historical chronicles.[256] Ji Dejun 紀德君 examines how in many *Sanyan-Erpai* stories seemingly minor objects, such as shirts, paintings, and rings, become the basis for the plot and the key to the story's development.[257] Liu Zhe 劉哲, meanwhile, categorises the plot types in the love stories in the collections into single connected plotlines, dual parallel plotlines, and dual interweaving plotlines.[258] Yuan Hongmei 袁紅梅 and Wang Xin 王昕 link the narrative methods used in *Erpai* with the genre's subsequent descent into mediocrity. Yuan ascribes this to the formulaic

[254] Shen Jinhao, "Lun *Sanyan-Erpai* de kejuguan yu mendiguan" 論《三言》、《二拍》的科舉觀與門第觀.

[255] Zhang Yong 張勇, *Zhongguo jinshi baihua duanpianxiaoshuo xushi fazhan yanjiu* 中國近世白話短篇小說敘事發展研究, ch.7.

[256] Feng Ruilan 馮瑞蘭, "Xiaoyi *Erpai* de xushi moshi: jian yu wenyan xiaoshuo bijiao" 小議《二拍》的敘事模式: 兼與文言小說比較.

[257] Ji Dejun, "*Sanyan-Erpai* jiegou yishu xintan"《三言》、《二拍》結構藝術新探.

[258] Liu Zhe 劉哲, "*Sanyan-Erpai* hunlian xiaoshuo de jiegou xingshi"《三言》、《二拍》婚戀小說的結構形式.

use of karmic retribution and fate as a structure, as well as Ling's tendency to labour the didactic point at the expense of detailed character depiction.[259] Wang Xin's article takes a similar line, noting that Ling tends to force inappropriate themes onto stories that cannot necessarily support them, rendering the stories narrower and shallower than their potential.[260]

Other works

In addition to the major directions of research into *Erpai* mentioned above, there are also other works. These include those written by Sun Xu 孫旭[261] and Hou Qunxiang 侯群香,[262] who have both approached the collections from a geographical perspective, looking at *Erpai*'s relationship with the Jiangnan region where Ling lived and many of the stories are based. Zhao Lumei 趙璐梅 has conducted a structuralist analysis of *Erpai*, identifying major nodes and themes such as "revenge", "destiny", "money" and "righteousness".[263] Wang Hongtai's work, mentioned above in

[259] Yuan Hongmei 袁紅梅, "Cong *Erpai* kan nihuaben pingyong pinge de xingcheng" 從《二拍》看擬話本平庸品格的形成.
[260] Wang Xin 王昕, "Lun nihuaben pingyong pinge de chengxing: cong *Erpai* kan wenren xushi fangshi dui nihuaben de yingxiang" 論擬話本平庸品格的成型: 從《二拍》看文人敘事方式對擬話本的影響.
[261] Sun Xu 孫旭, "Ling Mengchu diyu yishi shuping: yi *Erpai* wei li" 凌濛初地域意識述評：以《二拍》爲例.
[262] Hou Qunxiang 侯群香, "Lun *Sanyan-Erpai* de Jiangnan shikong xushi" 論《三言》、《二拍》的江南時空敘事.
[263] Zhao Lumei 趙璐梅, "*Erpai* de jiegouzhuyi yanjiu"《二拍》的結構主義研究.

connection to love, also presents a broader picture of the history of mentality revealed in the stories.

This thesis

The main contribution of this thesis is the argument that *Erpai* represents a reimagining of the vernacular short story as defined by Feng Menglong. Ling Mengchu reinvented the genre as one in which functional effect took primacy over all other considerations. In place of Feng's concern for the literary respectability and perceived popular origins of the texts, Ling focuses on the entertaining and didactic effects of the stories on their audience. This argument is supported by analysis of the ways in which the range of textual roles available in *huaben* fiction are used to enhance the entertainment value and didactic effect of *Erpai*. This adds to existing research by re-evaluating the significance of the stories. One implication is that they are not merely inferior imitations of the *Sanyan* collections, as argued by critics, but are highly successful in their own terms.

In addition to proposing a different perspective on the significance of the stories, this thesis makes a new contribution to scholarship on *Erpai* through its analysis of the techniques Ling uses for didacticism and entertainment, with its particular focus on the use of different textual roles. Research such as that performed by Zhang Yong on

narrative modes in Chinese short vernacular fiction concentrates on analysis of the narrative style itself and thus has a different focus to this thesis, which examines the techniques by which the narrative style is used to further the aims of the text. In addition to this, the focus on textual roles in this thesis means that Ling's marginal and interlinear commentary is considered as an integral part of the work, as argued by David Rolston in his book *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines*. This approach affords the commentary a more central position than it is given in the majority of existing studies on *Erpai*, opening the way for a more rounded understanding of the text.

This thesis also makes new contributions to the study of didacticism and entertainment in *Erpai*. In the case of didacticism, there is a large amount of high quality scholarship debating the specific moral values expressed through the text and their relation to the late Ming context; this is ground that will not be re-trod in this thesis. Instead of answering the question "What is the didactic message in *Erpai*?", this thesis contains an in-depth analysis of the ways in which the features of the *huaben* are used to enhance the didacticism of the stories, asking the question "How is didactism expressed in *Erpai*?". In this way, it can complement works such as those

by Feng Baoshan,[264] Duan Jiangli 段江麗,[265] and Huang Aihua,[266] which concentrate on the content and social context to the didacticism rather than the literary techniques used to accomplish it, apart from a brief mention of the use of negative and positive models.[267]

In the case of entertainment, an aspect that is, generally speaking, less well-researched than didacticism in vernacular fiction, this thesis contributes an in-depth analysis of the techniques Ling employs to make the stories more entertaining. The portion of this research on entertainment adds to works such as Ji Dejun's article "'Pai'an' heyi 'jingqi'?: *Erpai* chuanqi yishu lun" '拍案' 何以 '驚奇'?: 《二拍》傳奇藝術論 (How is one surprised enough to slap the table?: a theory of the art used to transmit *qi* in *Erpai*), which describes some of the ways that Ling creates *qi* in his stories: selection of materials, explicit emphasis of how extraordinary the story is, insertion of supernatural elements, focus on extraordinary people, and skilful use of coincidences.[268] Fu Chengzhou's article on Ling's views on *qi* also makes similar points about selection of materials and plot development, also pointing out that the

[264] Feng Baoshan, "Lun *Erpai* de quanshi shuojiao" 論《二拍》的勸世說教.
[265] Duan Jiangli 段江麗, "Lixue yu *Sanyan-Erpai* zhong de daode shuojiao" 理學與《三言》、《二拍》中的道德說教.
[266] Huang Aihua, "Shilun wan Ming xiaoshuo *Erpai* de jiaohua qingxiang" 試論晚明小說《二拍》的教化傾向.
[267] Ibid., p.51.
[268] Ji Dejun, "'Pai'an' heyi 'jingqi'?: *Erpai* chuanqi yishu lun" '拍案' 何以 '驚奇'?: 《二拍》傳奇藝術論.

works present extraordinary concepts.[269] This thesis builds on these works by taking a broader perspective on what constitutes "entertainment": rather than focusing on *qi* as the two works above do, other factors that contribute to entertainment value, such as eroticism, are included in the scope of the analysis. Moreover, the focus on textual roles seen throughout the thesis means that the research on entertainment looks beyond Ling's actions as a writer and editor emphasised by the above works to consider how his roles as storyteller and commentator are also employed to make the stories more entertaining.

This thesis, then, makes new contributions to existing research on *Erpai* in three areas. On a broad scale, it treads new ground by arguing that *Erpai*'s focus on functional effect represents a fundamental reimagination of the *huaben* genre; while some concern with functional effect is visible in *Sanyan*, it is not at the core of the stories. Secondly, it makes a new contribution in its analysis of the techniques used to enhance the didactic effect of the stories. Finally, the third new contribution comes through its analysis of the techniques used to make the stories more entertaining.

The core chapters on entertainment and didacticism are both concerned with the effect that *Erpai* has on its audience. As a foundation for the analysis of these

[269] Fu Chengzhou, "Ling Mengchu de shangqiguan yu *Erpai* zhi qi" 凌濛初的尚奇觀與《二拍》之奇.

features, an in-depth case study of the likely intended readership of *Erpai* is necessary, and this is carried out in Chapter Two. This marks a secondary contribution of this thesis. While the analysis here is focused on *Erpai*, the conclusions drawn have the potential to be applied in wider discussions of the intended readership of vernacular fiction.

The primary methodology employed in all chapters is close analysis of the primary source texts, read with particular reference to the interactions between Ling Mengchu's three textual roles: writer, storyteller, and commentator. In addition to the use of textual roles, Chapter Three borrows the theoretical framework of ventriloquism in order to inform readings of the source texts and reveal the techniques used to make the stories more didactic. The anlaysis in Chapter Four, meanwhile, employs traditional and modern definitions of entertainment, excitation-transfer theory, and close comparison with source materials to examine the ways in which the stories are made more entertaining. Finally, Chapter Five takes a comparative approach, comparing the different uses of the three textual roles in *Sanyan* and *Erpai*.

Chapter Two: Intended Audience

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CHAPTER 2

Readerships of vernacular fiction

The main aspects of Ling Mengchu's reimagination of the vernacular story, entertainment and didacticism, are both concerned with the intended impact of the work on its audience: its "functional effect". Therefore, in order to lay a foundation for analysis of these features of the work, it is vital to establish who Ling intended his readers to be, the question that this chapter will attempt to answer.

The readership of vernacular fiction is "normally just vaguely termed the 'urban class'" 一般只是籠統地稱其為「市民階層」.[1] However, this idea is by no means accepted by every scholar. For example, Robert Hegel argues that "highly literate members of the social elite who acknowledged their role in the production of vernacular fiction were usually writing specifically for their peers".[2] Pan Jianguo 潘建國 is also dissatisfied with the classification, and demonstrates that it masks a far more complex reality.[3] Cheng Guofu also questions its vagueness, noting that different works may well have had different readerships at different times.[4]

[1] Pan Jianguo, "Ming-Qing shiqi tongsu xiaoshuo de duzhe yu chuanbo fangshi" 明清時期通俗小說的讀者與傳播方式, p.118.
[2] Hegel, "Distinguishing Levels of Audience for Ming-Ch'ing Vernacular Literature", p.126.
[3] Pan Jianguo, "Ming-Qing shiqi tongsu xiaoshuo de duzhe yu chuanbo fangshi", p.119.
[4] Cheng Guofu, "Ming-Qing xiaoshuo duzhe yu tongsu xiaoshuo kanke zhi guanxi chanxi" 明代小說讀者與通俗小說刊刻之關係闡析, p.65.

On the more specific subject of the readership of *Erpai*, Cheng Guofu suggests that it was tailored to an audience of merchants and low-ranking students, based on the subject matter of the stories. He sees the appearance of large numbers of characters from these classes to be indicative of catering to their aesthetic demands for fiction that represents people like them, this in turn being reflective of a wider shift in the centre of gravity in fiction consumption towards lower class urbanites.[5] Li Guikui also takes a similar view, seeing the sometimes unconventional morality, acceptance of material desires, and sexual scenes in the stories as evidence of Ling pandering to the tastes of the urban classes to whom the books were being sold.[6]

However, this internal evidence is subject to a number of interpretations. For instance, it is possible that the greater prominence of humble characters is related to Ling's stated search for the extraordinary in the mundane. Meanwhile, the greater acceptance of material desires in the works and the occasional examples of unconventional morality could also be a considered reflection of the philosophies of Li Zhi. Moreover, Ling's acceptance of material desire, for example, has its limits. As seen in Chapter One, a passage describing Huizhou merchants returning home and being welcomed based on the amount of money they have made is not an example of Ling trying to warm the hearts of his urban merchant audience, as argued by Li

[5] Ibid., p.67.
[6] Li Guikui, "Lun *Erpai* chuangzuo de shichang jingji yishi", p.53-4.

Guikui.[7] In contrast, his disdain for the value system he is describing is made clear through marginal commentary.[8]

Yang Shuhui takes a different approach to internal evidence in his work on *Sanyan*, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*. This uses instances in which the reader is addressed directly by the storyteller or commentator to deduct the possible intended audience, noting that this suggests a literati audience for Feng's stories. Given the didactic purpose of the works, this is perhaps a more reliable and objective approach, and examples from *Erpai* will be examined in the final section of this chapter.

Prior to that, however, this chapter will approach the question of the intended audience from three general angles: the use of Classical allusions, the use of dialect, and the cost of buying the book, equating primarily but not exclusively to the education, geographical origin and socio-economic class of the audience respectively. Analysis in each area can simultaneously narrow down the potential audience and suggest the intended audience. Finally, features that directly suggest the intended audience, such as the publisher's marketing approach and marginal commentary addressed at specific groups, will be considered. Before examining each of these

[7] Ibid., p.54.
[8] See p.20.

elements as they apply to *Erpai*, more general evidence about literacy, the implications of the use of the vernacular, and the cost of books will be considered.

Literacy

Anecdotal contemporary evidence suggests a relatively wide readership of certain works and a large literate population, in absolute if not relative terms. The Korean traveller Choe Bu 崔溥 (1454-1504) travelled around China in Ming times. He asked Chinese people questions in writing, and so formed an impression of the level of literacy:

> People south of the river, moreover, read books. Even village children, ferrymen, and sailors can read. When I came to their region and wrote questions to ask them, they understood everything about the mountains, river, old ruins, places, and dynastic changes and told me about it minutely. North of the river, the unschooled are many. That is why when I wanted to ask them something they would all say, "We do not understand the characters".[9]

> 江南人以讀書爲業，雖裏閈童稚及津夫、水夫皆識文字。臣至其地寫以問之，則凡山川古迹、土地沿革，皆曉解詳告之。江北則不學者多，故臣欲問之則皆曰「我不識字」。[10]

[9] Meskill, trans., *Ch'oe Pu's Diary: A Record of Drifting Across the Sea*, p.155.
[10] Choe Bu 崔溥, *Piaohai lu* 漂海錄, p.194.

It is unclear whether these people answered Choe in writing or verbally; if they did so in writing it would imply a very high level of general literacy indeed, at least in Jiangnan. The other interesting feature of this anecdote is the way in which geography plays a role, with the north of China appearing to have a lower level of general literacy.

However, this anecdote only indicates a very basic level of literacy, and does not indicate the spread of education. In considering this issue, Wilt Idema estimates that 10% of the total male population and 5% of the total population had some level of literacy, with 1.25% of the population being what he terms "fully literate", and a mere fraction, estimated at 200,000 people during the Qing, being "highly literate".[11] Idema defines "fully literate" as "being able to read the Classics and to write a composition according to a set pattern",[12] while "highly literate" is defined as "those who had prepared for the provincial examinations…who served in an official capacity…and who had both the interest and means to devote their leisure to study".[13] These figures should not be regarded as definitive, as Idema freely admits: they are also arrived at from anecdotal evidence, this time provided by three late 19th century

[11] Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period*, p.LI-LII.
[12] Ibid., p.LI.
[13] Ibid., p.LII.

foreign visitors. Applying these figures to previous dynasties involves another extrapolation.[14] Despite these potential issues, which Idema takes into account fully in his argument, the 5% estimate matches a figure suggested by F.W. Mote and arrived at using a different methodology,[15] suggesting that both may be roughly correct. This division of the literate population into three layers is a useful one, and the terms "literate", "fully literate", and "highly literate" used in this chapter should be understood as Idema defines them.

Vernacular literacy and dialect

While Idema looks at the education of the reader as a means to define potential audience, Patrick Hanan approaches the problem from a different angle: the language of the story. He visualises the potential audiences for literature in late-Imperial times as a series of concentric circles: "the circle of the Classical literature…surrounded by the somewhat larger circle of the vernacular…both…engulfed by the vastly larger circle of the oral, the only true mass literature of premodern times".[16] Both, then, agree that the proportion of the total population that could access written literature was very small.

[14] Ibid., p.XLIX.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.13.

However, they disagree on the crucial matter of the potential readership of vernacular fiction. Idema sees the fundamental division in readership as being between the "literary novel" on one hand and the "chapbook" on the other: the "literary novel" read by educated people and the "chapbook" by the less literate. Idema notes that the "chapbook" is written in "a very stereotyped 'novelese', a very simple *wen-yen* [*wenyan*] with the occasional use of some *pai-hua* [*baihua*] particles",[17] and ascribes this in part to the theory that since the traditional education system taught students how to read only the literary language, it is a simplified form of this that would be accessible to the widest audience. On the other hand, he suggests that literary vernacular works must have been designed for a "highly literate" reader, given that they employ both "abstruse *wen-yen* and racy local dialect".[18] This leads him to suggest that even novels such as *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (The Romance of the Three Kingdoms) and *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin), which enjoyed "so much popularity that they were read by all segments of the literate public",[19] were read by the "fully literate" group only at many points in history.[20]

Meanwhile, Hanan suggests that the audience for fiction in vernacular, simplified literary language, and a mix of the two "must have exceeded that for the ordinary

[17] Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period*, p.LIV.
[18] Ibid., p.LIV.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p.LV.

Classical literature by the addition of some boys and women and also of the less-lettered classes- merchants, shopkeepers, shop assistants, lower functionaries, and the like",[21] based on the notion that the written vernacular was an easier language to master than the literary language. This is persuasively borne out by a quote from Li Yu about how one should start teaching one's concubine to read by using the vernacular:

> The language that is present in *chuanqi* and fiction is all normal speech and common words; when women read it, it is as if they are meeting something familiar. For example, in one sentence there are ten characters, seven of which the woman knows and three of which she does not know. If she reads the sentence out without thinking then naturally she will not go wrong. Because of the seven characters she already knows, she can discover the three that she does not know. These three characters are not taught by me; they are taught by the *chuanqi* or fiction.
>
> 傳奇、小說所載之言，盡是常談俗語，婦人閱之，若逢故物。譬如一句之中，共有十字，此女已識者七，未識者三，順口念去，自然不差。是因已識之七字，可悟未識之三字，則此三字也者，非我教之，傳奇、小說教之也。[22]

[21] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.11.
[22] Li Yu 李漁, "Xiji di si" 習技第四, *Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記 j.3, *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集 v.3, p.144.

In addition to this, Hanan gives the example of educational and propaganda works being written in the vernacular "in order to reach a wider, less lettered readership".[23] He also holds that the traditional education system would have taught students to read vernacular Chinese due to the use of vernacular pedagogical texts and the fact that many characters are used in both the vernacular and literary languages.[24] On the question of dialect, he maintains that vernacular authors "took some pains to avoid words and idioms with too narrow a currency and tended to choose a vocabulary intelligible within the whole Northern area",[25] thus maximising their potential audience.

Cost

The cost of books is also important in defining a potential audience, and Idema examines the question of audience from a bibliographic perspective. He notes that literary works were published in lavish, high-quality, and expensive editions, whereas "chapbooks" were only available in poor-quality printings. This evidently restricts the potential audience of literary novels on financial lines, and also gives a strong indication as to the intended audience of the works, especially where first editions are concerned. However, he notes that a small number of the most popular literary works

[23] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.10.
[24] Ibid., p.11.
[25] Ibid., p.2.

were available in cheaper editions, though still expensive to many people.[26] This is significant as one of these works was *Jingu qiguan*, which includes stories from *Pai'an jingqi*.

Cost also features prominently in Pan Jianguo's analysis of readership for vernacular fiction. He finds that there are no records of poor people buying books in Imperial vernacular fiction, though there are many records of wealthy people of varied backgrounds buying them.[27] Furthermore, by carrying out a comparison between a Ming record of prices for everyday goods and an edition of *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 (Investiture of the Gods) with a cover price of two *liang* held in Japan, he calculates that in the Wanli period one could have bought 50 chickens, 40 dogs, or 154 *jin* of jujubes for the price of one copy of the book: evidently, this book was a luxury.[28] Pan also cites Lü Fu 呂撫 (1671-1742), who in chapter 42 of *Ershisi shi tongsu yanyi* 二十四史通俗演義 (Popular Romances of the Twenty Four Histories) describes having to edit the work down from 650 chapters in 240 *juan* to 44 chapters in 26 *juan*: even with him doing much of the printing work himself, he sighed that the larger work would have been so expensive that it would have been "a book for the rich, not [a] popular [work]" 此富人書也，非通俗也.[29] This leads him to conclude that such

[26] Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period,* p.LXI.
[27] Pan Jianguo, "Ming-Qing shiqi tongsu xiaoshuo de duzhe yu chuanbo fangshi", p.119.
[28] Ibid., p.120.
[29] Lü Fu 呂撫, *Ershisi shi tongsu yanyi* 二十四史通俗演義, p.626.

high prices limited the purchasers of Ming and Qing vernacular fiction to merchants, officials, and wealthy intellectuals, primarily concentrated in the more economically advanced regions of the country.[30] Meanwhile, outside this group of people there existed another group of less wealthy individuals who accessed the text through lending between friends or rental libraries.[31]

Pan also proposes a further distinction within the audience of fiction: between "direct readers" who read the book, and "indirect readers" who encountered the contents of the books through other channels such as storytelling or drama. That this is a necessary one is shown by the complaints of early Qing literatus Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804):

> In ancient times there were three teachings: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Since Ming times, another teaching has appeared, known as "fiction". Books of fiction and historical romance have never proclaimed themselves to be a teaching. However, no official, farmer, artisan, merchant, or trader is not habituated to hearing them, and even women, small children, and the illiterate all *hear them as if they had seen them*. That is why the teaching [of fiction], when compared to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, is more widely spread.

[30] Pan Jianguo, "Ming-Qing shiqi tongsu xiaoshuo de duzhe yu chuanbo fangshi", p.121-122.
[31] Ibid., p.119.

[Even] Buddhism and Daoism encourage people to do good; fiction specialises in guiding people to do evil.

古有儒、釋、道三教，自明以來，又多一教曰小說。小說演義之書，未嘗自以為教也。而士大夫、農、工、商、賈、無不習聞之，以至兒童、婦女、不識字者，亦皆聞而如見之，是其教較之儒、釋、道而更廣也。釋道猶勸人以善；小說專導人以惡。[32] [emphasis added]

While Qian has a vested interest in exaggerating fiction's reach to underline its threat to moral order, this suggests an indirect audience of fiction broad enough to include all sectors of society, including the illiterate. As will be examined further in Chapter Four, the "retellability" of fiction was regarded as a key marker of its entertainment value and was alluded to by Ling in his prefaces, suggesting that he fully expected the stories in the books to be retold by his direct audience.

Xie Jun 謝君 has a different take on the situation: that market forces, including widespread piracy, would have acted on book merchants to make their actual prices cheaper than that advertised on the cover of *Fengshen yanyi*, while incomes were

[32] Qian Daxin 錢大昕, *Qianyantang wenji* 潛研堂文集 j.17, *Jiading Qian Daxin quanji* 嘉定錢大昕全集 v.9, p.272.

higher than thought.[33] He concludes that "anyone with a little spare money could become a direct purchaser of block-printed editions of vernacular stories" 生活略有結餘的民衆都可能成爲通俗小說刻本的直接購買者;[34] however, there is little hard evidence to back this up. In any case, this chapter is concerned with the intended audience; therefore, indirect audiences and the possible impact of piracy post-publication fall outside its remit.

In this chapter, then, three questions will be considered. Firstly, early *Pai'an jingqi* editions will be examined in order to narrow potential audience on an economic basis and also, through examination of paratextual materials, on the basis of their expected level of education. There is also the question of the language used in the stories and the effect this has on readership. While the evidence suggests that the vernacular was indeed easier to read, the use of local dialect would require a more literate readership, and this is the second issue that must be considered. The third issue to be examined is the use of Classical allusions, another factor that acts to constrain potential readership to the more educated sectors of society. Finally, the way in which Ling and his publisher addressed specific audiences through marginal commentary and publisher's

[33] Xie Jun 謝君 , "Ming-Qing shufang ye yu tongsu xiaoshuo xiaoshou" 明清書坊業與通俗小說銷售, pp.92-94.
[34] Ibid., p.94.

notes respectively is examined, before all factors are combined and the intended audience of *Erpai* proposed.

Evidence from early editions of *Erpai*

The first area to be examined in this attempt to propose a likely target audience for Ling's works is the earliest edition of the text. The quality of the edition has the potential to reveal information on the wealth of the intended readers. For the purposes of this study, the first editions are the most important: while subsequent editions may yield useful evidence regarding the actual reading public, this may or may not be the same as the audience that the author and original publisher intended. As Ling and his publisher An Shaoyun 安少雲 (n.d.) appeared to have a close working relationship, based on the content of the prefaces and the fact that both collections were published by the same publishing house, it is likely that they shared a similar vision of the intended audience.

One problem with relying on evidence from physical texts is that better-executed editions are more likely to have survived to the present day. There are a number of factors behind this. High-quality editions were more collectable, and the quality of the paper used affects the book's chances of physical survival. In addition, some booksellers were unwilling to associate themselves with lower-quality editions, a

phenomenon illustrated by the surprising, and, as Lucille Chia concludes, misleading absence of lower-quality editions in data on the Nanjing book trade.[35] Therefore, the absence of lower-quality texts today, while suggestive, does not necessarily mean that cheaper editions did not exist in the past.

Moreover, there is a lack of accurate price data from the time, as noted by Idema and Hegel.[36] Without knowing the exact relationship between book prices and incomes, it is difficult to say who could or could not have afforded a certain edition. Therefore, all that can be assessed with certainty is the relative price of a book. Hegel includes "the size, precision of detail, accuracy, and style of the printed graphs, the number, location, stylistic complexity, and definition in carving of the illustrations, and the size, color, and finish of the paper" in his assessment of the quality of an edition.[37]

While the characteristics above relate to the cost of an edition, there are other features that can give clues to the educational level of readers. Booksellers and publishers of the time had become adept at the "repackaging" of texts.[38] This meant that the same basic text could be printed in multiple ways, with features such as illustrations and

[35] Chia, "Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing", p.141.
[36] Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period*, p.LVIII; Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction", p.240.
[37] Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction", p.240.
[38] McLaren, "Investigating Readerships in Late-Imperial China: A Reflection on Methodologies", p.111.

commentary adapted for audiences with varying levels of literacy and wealth. McLaren gives the example of *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) texts for less literate readers that contain commentary explaining basic concepts and even simple vocabulary items such as *qi* 妻 (wife).[39] Feng Menglong, too, regularly uses marginal commentary as a tool to give readings for less well-known characters.[40] Meanwhile, the *shangtu-xiawen* 上圖下文 (pictures on top and text underneath) format gave less-educated readers the chance to "read the pictures",[41] making the text more accessible. At the other end of the market, commentary tended to explore issues at a higher level, more attention was paid to the demands of aesthetic taste in the execution of the edition, and illustrations were more refined.

Ming dynasty Shangyou tang editions

Taking these considerations into account, therefore, the Ming Shangyou tang editions of both collections will be examined with respect to the quality of their printing and illustrations, as well as any paratextual features that appear to be designed to help the readers. The editions examined here are the Shangyou tang 40 *juan* and Fu Shangyou tang 39 *juan* editions of *Pai'an jingqi*, and the Shangyou tang edition of *Erke pai'an*

[39] Ibid., p.119.
[40] For examples see Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.268, 283, 523; *JSTY*, p.660; *XSHY*, p.509.
[41] McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China", p.167.

jingqi, the sole surviving edition of this work. Of these, only the 40 *juan* version of *Pai'an jingqi* is a first edition; the other two are reprints, each with one story missing. However, they remain the most direct link with the original textual form of the works.

The 39 and 40 *juan* editions of *Pai'an jingqi* both open with a preface written by Ling Mengchu, while *Erke pai'an jingqi* opens with one preface by Ling himself and one by an as-yet unknown scholar styling himself as the Shuixiang jushi 睡鄉居士 or "Hermit in the Land of Sleep". The characters in the prefaces in all three editions are printed in calligraphic style and resemble a manuscript, a type of printing used in the Song dynasty and beloved of Ming literati aesthetes.[42] This style of flowing character was complex to cut onto woodblocks, requiring a highly skilled craftsperson. This is probably the reason that the main body of the text is printed in the simpler and significantly cheaper[43] artisan or so-called "Song" style 宋體. This compromise is not unique to *Erpai,* though it is nevertheless apparent that the publisher was aiming at the middle to high end of the market, without courting the "most demanding literary aesthetes" with elaborately produced manuscript-like editions.[44]

[42] McDermott, "The Ascendance of the Imprint in China", p.80.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., p.81.

However, this does not mean that the publishers cut costs wherever they could. The characters of the main text are well-cut and clearly printed, and are well-spaced on the page. This, as well as necessitating a great amount of care during block cutting, also brings higher costs due to the skill demanded of the craftsperson and the increased number of blocks and sheets of paper required to print the book. While this feature increases cost, it is also true that a well-spaced layout increased the ease of reading.[45] The vast majority of characters throughout the works are printed clearly and to a high standard, though in places some smudging has occurred. The characters are also given *quandian* 圈點 (circles and dots) markings, highlighting important passages and indicating parsing of sentences.

After the preface and contents page are a series of illustrations, two for each story. These illustrations are of a high artistic standard, extremely detailed in places, and very clear. The difference in quality between these and some of the somewhat cruder illustrations preceding an 1808 edition of *Bao gong'an* 包公案 (Cases of Judge Bao) is immediately evident.[46] The quality of these illustrations is comparable to those for which the finely-produced Rongyu tang 容與堂 edition of *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin) is famous,[47] though they are not as detailed as examples found in the

[45] McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China", p.167.
[46] Anon. (Ming), *Bao gong'an* 包公案 (The Cases of Judge Bao), plate ix.
[47] Reproduced in Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction", p.247.

Huancui tang 環翠堂 edition of *Yilie ji* 義烈記 (Record of Righteousness and Virtue),[48] in which "all available space is taken up with fine lines, most of them curved".[49] The carver, Liu Junyu, 劉君裕 (n.d.), also produced illustrations for *Shuihu zhuan*, *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 (Journey to the West), and *Lieguo zhi zhuan* 列國志傳 (History of the States), all "outstanding examples" of late Ming Suzhou illustration.[50] Their size and quantity (an original total of 160 per volume at a half folio each) also suggests that producing these illustrations was not a cheap undertaking.

The marginal commentary in these editions has not been adapted to serve the needs of the less-educated reader by explaining the meaning of words in the same way as the *Sanguo* text mentioned above. The exception to this is one marginal comment in story I-17, in which a neologism is explained: "The two characters 'piss pot' are very new. They mean 'a Daoist's catamite'"「尿鬻」二字新甚，以其為道士之幸童也.[51] There is also a lack of any other paratextual reading aids.

Other editions

[48] Reproduced in Brokaw and Chow ed., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, London: University of California Press, 2005, p252.
[49] Reproduced in Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction", p.253.
[50] Zhu Zhongshou 祝重壽 ed., *Zhongguo chatu yishu shihua* 中國插圖藝術史話, p.62.
[51] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.495.

The edition that perhaps comes closest to emulating the quality of the original Shangyou tang editions is a Ming publication by Xiaoxian ju 消閒居, held in Beijing University library. Though the marginal commentary has been lost, this edition has a well-spaced character layout and retains *quandian* marking and occasional interlineal commentary. The illustrations, which differ slightly from the Shangyou tang ones, are still of high quality, and while the type of the preface is different to the Shangyou tang editions, it is still in the relatively expensive calligraphic style.

Another edition dated to the Ming is published by Songhe zhai 松鶴齋, and is also held in Beijing University library. This edition, though still featuring clearly cut characters, shows signs of cost cutting when compared to the Shangyou tang original edition. First of all, the introduction is not printed in the aesthetically pleasing calligraphic style of the originals, being in a more functional type, though the characters are large and well-spaced. The illustrations are missing, as is the marginal commentary. The *quandian* markup on the main text found in the original editions is also gone, and the characters are pressed closer together.

Other editions from the Qing include a 1784 edition of *Pai'an jingqi* in the Royal Asiatic Society collection held in Leeds University. Though this was published by Fuwen tang 富文堂, the blocks used are from Shangyou tang and have the name of this

publishing house printed on the fold of each leaf. Some blocks had apparently been lost and subsequently recut in a quality approximating that of the Shangyou tang originals. However, there are several places where misprinted characters have been corrected by a subsequent reader. Faded characters and characters missing strokes are also not uncommon. The edition is not complete: all illustrations are missing, along with the *fanli* introductory remarks and the last four stories. It is probable however that the illustrations were lost after publication: the edition is titled "A New Printing of the Illustrated and Commented Original Edition" 新鐫繡像批評原本. The National Library of China holds another Qing edition, published by Tongren tang 同人堂, which is also of lower quality than the originals, with closely crowded characters, no *quandian*, an artisan-style introduction, and no commentary.

There are several extant copies of an early Qing edition,[52] again from Xiaoxian ju, though not of as high quality as the late Ming Xiaoxian ju edition in Beijing University library. This became the basis for several subsequent Qing editions. While the characters are well cut, certain of the illustrations are less fine compared to the original Shangyou tang edition, a feature clearly visible in the depictions of human figures. In addition, while the characters of the main text are very similar to the Ming

[52] One copy of this edition has been digitised by Harvard and is available here: http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL:3588539 [Accessed: 13th June 2016]. Another copy has been digitised by Tokyo University and is available here: http://shanben.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/list.php?col=si&str=%E9%9B%99%E7%B4%85%E5%A0%82-%E5%B0%8F%E8%AA%AA-38 [Accessed: 13th June 2016].

Xiaoxian ju edition, the interlineal commentary retained in that edition is lacking. Beijing University library also holds a Xiaoxian ju edition featuring completely recarved blocks and dating from 1778: commentary and illustrations are missing from this edition also.

That these later editions, especially the Qing editions, are generally of lower quality than the original editions suggests that they were cheaper and aimed at a less-affluent audience. This fits in with wider trends occurring at the time, including the "large and active market for works of vernacular fiction", and the "desire to expand the buying public to include those who were less affluent than the cultural elite". [53] However, the Qing editions examined are still of reasonable quality and do not show any evidence of substantial "repackaging" with different commentary and paratextual materials in order to appeal to audiences with different levels of literacy. This could be explained either by the fact that "literate segments of the population were growing in magnitude through the Qing",[54] meaning that a larger audience could be reached by reducing the cost of editions without the need to commission such extra materials, or it may simply be the case that these later publishers were not aiming their offerings at less literate readers either.

[53] Hegel, "Niche Marketing for Late Imperial Fiction", p.237.
[54] Ibid., p.238.

Conclusion- bibliographic evidence

Returning to the Ming editions and the question of intended audience, it appears that the Shangyou tang editions were designed for readers that had the means to purchase good-quality editions at the mid-to-high end of the market. Thought has been given to making the book visually appealing through the provision of a preface in calligraphic style and the addition of quality illustrations. At the same time, no paratextual materials aimed at aiding less-educated readers are given. The generously-spaced page layout, while making reading slightly easier, also contributes to the increased cost of the edition. However, the publisher has opted not to create a highly lavish edition aimed at the very top of the market. The Qing editions thus far examined suggest that while the cost of editions came down in line with the wider market, the level of literacy required to read the works did not. This leads to the conclusion that the intended audience for the work must have been individuals with both a good degree of literacy and the means to purchase good quality editions.

Regional language in *Erpai*

Ling Mengchu lived in Wucheng, near the shores of Taihu lake. Wu 吳, the language spoken in this region, is mutually unintelligible with Northern Chinese (Mandarin) and the Min 閩, Yue 越, and Gan 贛 languages spoken further south. This unintelligibility is not confined to the spoken language only: despite the ideographic

nature of the Chinese writing system, the differences between the "major Chinese *fangyan* in phonology, lexicon, orthography, and grammar are so great that it is impossible for a reader of one of them to make much sense of materials written in another of them".[55] Indeed, languages other than literary Chinese and the northern vernacular "never developed orthographical conventions that were recognised by a substantial segment of their speakers",[56] further impeding the easy intelligibility of a text written wholly in Wu even to Wu speakers.

Perhaps due to this practical consideration, and the greater prestige attached to northern vernacular as the *lingua franca* of traders and officials, by the Tang dynasty a norm had been established whereby the northern language was used to write the vernacular. [57] Ling, like fellow Wu speaker Feng Menglong, largely followed this norm in his works. However, the influence of Wu is nevertheless evident in their stories in both grammar and vocabulary. If this influence is too strong, the factor that makes the vernacular language more understandable, that "it is as if [the readers] are meeting something familiar" 若逢故物,[58] is removed for readers outside the Wu area, and the potential audience of the works would perhaps be limited to Idema's "highly literate" group nationwide and the "fully literate group" in the Wu area. Aware of this

[55] Mair, "What Is a Chinese 'Dialect/Topolect'?: Reflections on Some Key Sino-English Linguistic Terms", p.7.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.2.
[58] Li Yu, "Xiji di si", *Xianqing ouji* j.3, *Li Yu quanji* v.3, p.144.

limitation, “vernacular authors took some pains to avoid words and idioms with too narrow a currency and tended to choose a vocabulary intelligible within the whole Northern area”.[59] Where this was not possible or aesthetically desirable, Feng Menglong even took the somewhat drastic step of having the storyteller explain words with different usages in north and south China.[60] However, Cheng Guofu, who compares *Sanyan* and *Erpai* stories with versions found in later anthologies, has discovered that intelligibility was sometimes an issue in both collections.[61] The versions of stories seen in anthologies often replace Wu words with more widely understood ones. For example, in the version of II-14 in *Jingu qiguan*, the Wu word *shenghuo* 生活, meaning “cloth” in this context, has been replaced by *cujin* 粗錦, meaning “rough brocade”;[62] in I-6, the word *bai* 擺, meaning “to swagger”, has been replaced with the more prosaic *zou* 走, “to walk”.[63] Therefore, it is necessary to

[59] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.2.
[60] For example, from GJ-5: “The people of the capital all naturally called her ‘the steamed dumpling lady’. In the north, the character *ao* is the same as the character *ma* in the south” 京師人順口都喚他做「賣饅媪」。北方的「媪」字，即如南方的「媽」字一般; and from TY-15: “They immediately searched for the county plainclothes constable (*yinbu*) to discuss the matter. When the people of Jiangnan say the word ‘*yinbu*’, it has the same meaning as what is called a ‘*fanzishou*’ in the north” 即時尋縣中陰捕商議。江南人說「陰捕」，就是北方叫「番子手」一般. Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.98; *JSTY*, p.203.
[61] Cheng Guofu, *Sanyan-Erpai chuanbo yanjiu*, p.73.
[62] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.244; Baoweng laoren 抱甕老人 ed., *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 j.38, p.7b, in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng*, series 3 v.7, p.1536.
[63] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.87; Meng xianzi manbi 夢閒子漫筆 ed., *Jingu chuanqi* 今古傳奇 j.7, p.1b, in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng*, series 2 v.17, p.180.

examine the impact of Wu words in the collections as a whole on the potential readership.

Proportion of Wu words

Xu Jingqian 徐靜茜 has produced a list of the Wu vocabulary and sentence patterns found in both volumes of *Pai'an jingqi*, to which this section is indebted.[64] This list was used as a basis to search an electronic version of the text and count the occurrences of Wu words in the collections. The full results, along with a full explanation of the methodology used, can be seen in Appendix II.

The figures show that there are only 2,668 occurrences of Wu words in the works as a whole. This works out as 5,401 characters in a body of work that is roughly 780,000 characters long once the *zaju* and the duplicated story are discounted. There is no appreciable difference in the occurrence of Wu words either between the two volumes or between stories within each volume. Evidently, while this amount of Wu influence is sufficient to impart some local flavour to the stories, it is not significant enough to cause a major barrier to understanding. Moreover, while most words occur only once, a few words, such as (*shiti* 事體, *hao* 好 (in the sense of "may, should"), *shuohua* 說話 (in the noun sense of "story") are used over and over again. This is significant, as

[64] Xu Jingqian, "*Liangpai* suojian fangyan ciyu ji jushi".

the incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition means that a "great deal of vocabulary knowledge can be gained incidentally from context, even when individual encounters with words in context are not particularly informative".[65] That is, the *n*th time the reader sees a once-unfamiliar word it will not be as difficult as it was the first time.

Of course, vocabulary is only one part of what makes a language distinct: Xu Jingqian also lists sentence patterns that are characteristic of Wu. The total occurrences of each may also be found in Appendix II. While it was possible to find one of the patterns through a search, this was not possible for the other three. Therefore the occurrences in two stories were extrapolated to the collections as a whole. Moreover, there is evidence in *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (Large Chinese Dictionary) showing the Wu "V *delai* /V 得來 $_2$" structure,[66] in Wang Shifu's 王實甫 (1260-1336) *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (Romance of the Western Chamber).[67] Its appearance in this work by a native of Beijing shows that it is not exclusively associated with Wu, and it was duly disregarded.

[65] Nagy and Scott, "Vocabulary Processes", p.270.
[66] Xu Jingqian, "*Liangpai* suojian fangyan ciyu ji jushi", p.17.
[67] Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風 ed., *Hanyu da cidian suoyinben* 漢語大詞典縮印本 v.1, p.1863.

The estimated figures for sentence patterns tell the same story as those gained from vocabulary. Even the V-O-C structure, which has the highest number of occurrences, is not common when the scale of the work as a whole is considered. Based on these figures, then, it appears that Hanan was correct in his judgement that language with a narrow currency was broadly avoided, and that the impact of Wu usage on the intelligibility of the work as a whole was slight.

How Wu is used

These numbers and percentages are only part of the story: of greater interest is the way in which Ling uses Wu. For example, in I-33, the simulated storyteller describes a woman bringing her daughter from a previous marriage into her new marriage, adding "The common term for this is 'hauling an oil bottle" 俗名叫拖油瓶.[68] The repetition here allows Ling to use the colourful Wu phrase *tuo youping* 拖油瓶[69] and its associated imagery while not excluding readers unfamiliar with Wu. However when the phrase is used in II-10, Ling does not provide an overt explanation for it. The motivation behind this may in part be practical (it is part of direct speech, making it more difficult to add an in-text explanation smoothly) but Ling makes sure that the context provides enough information:

[68] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.529.
[69] This phrase appears to be more widely-used in Modern Chinese. However, the *Hanyu da cidian* does not give any pre-modern examples of usage outside *Pai'an jingqi*. See Luo Zhufeng ed., *Hanyu da cidian suoyinben* v.2, p.3578.

Suddenly, one day a group of people came in the gate and said they wanted to see the young third master. The gatekeeper was about to ask them about the details when one of the group shouted out "It's that oil bottle that got hauled over to the Zhu family"

忽然一日，有一夥人走進門來，說道要見小三官人的。這裏門上方要問明，內一人大聲道「便是朱家的拖油瓶」.[70]

As the reader has already been told about the "oil bottle's" family history earlier in the story, it is a simple deduction to make.

Ling also uses this tactic with other Wu phrases, such as *si bu niu liu* 四不拗六, meaning "four cannot defy six" (the few cannot overcome the many). The first time it occurs, it is followed directly by a rephrasing of the same meaning: "Bianwu [was in the position of] four being unable to defy six and could not hold the crowd off. He had no option but to unwrap the bundle…" 辨悟四不拗六，抵擋眾人不住，只得解開包袱…….[71] The second time it is used, in II-32, a similar phenomenon occurs: "Funiang [saw that] four were unable to defy six, and sobbed and cried some more in vain- how could she overrule them?" 福娘四不拗六，徒增些哭哭啼啼，怎生撇強

[70] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.186.
[71] Ibid., p.9.

得過？.[72] The idiom *beigezi wangbian fei* 鵪鴣子旺邊飛 (pigeons fly to wherever is more prosperous) is treated in an identical way, in I-20[73] and I-22,[74] as is *chi sha mantou dangbude fan* 吃殺饅頭當不得飯 (eating lots of *mantou* cannot take the place of rice) in I-26.[75] In addition to making understanding easier, this approach has the added aesthetic advantage that redundancy is also a characteristic of everyday speech.

However, these phrases and words are outnumbered by those with which the reader gets no help at all. The idiom *tiaode lanli bianshi cai* 挑得籃裡便是菜, meaning "to pick up whatever is in the basket and take it for vegetables" (to not be picky) is neither explained by the simulated storyteller nor particularly clear from the context: "The fellow villager urgently wanted to return, and 'picked up whatever was in the basket and took it for vegetables'. He sent a message in, and released Chen Ding on the spot" 鄉里是要緊歸去的人，挑得籃裏便是菜。一個信送將進去，登時把陳定放了出來.[76] Other examples of unexplained phrases include *ba duanti* 拔短梯, "to take away the short ladder" (to burn one's bridges), also from II-20,[77] and *yigu yiban* 一鼓一板 , meaning "one drum, one clapper" (to talk in turns, one person supporting

[72] Ibid., p.532.
[73] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.302.
[74] Ibid., p.346.
[75] Ibid., p.402.
[76] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.354.
[77] Ibid., p.355.

the other), in I-39[78] and II-22.[79] Moreover, the vast majority of Wu verbs are used without any supporting explanations.

This lack of consistency raises the question of why Ling explains some of the Wu words he uses but not others. One possibility is that this was a conscious decision: he believed the phrases he did explain had a narrower currency than the ones he did not, and that context was sufficient to ensure intelligibility. Of course, there is always the possibility that the very familiarity of the Wu language he was immersed in hampered his ability to judge what might be hard for other readers to understand.

Furthermore, there is evidence that while Ling may have been familiar with Wu, his ability to command other regional languages in order to achieve an artistic effect is not as great as that of the writer(s) of *Shuihu zhuan*, for example. While in *Shuihu zhuan* the background of each character comes through the way in which they speak (for example, Lu Zhishen 魯智深 repeatedly uses the north-western personal pronoun *sajia* 洒家)[80] Ling's characters tend to use Wu words even when they do not come from the Jiangnan area. This is perhaps most evident from story II-2. The *weiqi* 圍棋 champion Zhou Guoneng 周國能, originally from what is now Henan province,

[78] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.626.
[79] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.93.
[80] Ge Liangyan, *Out of the Margins*, p.188.

travels to the Liao 遼 state in the north to test his skills against the best player in Liao. Despite his Henanese origins, Zhou's dialogue contains the Wu words *peitou* 配頭 and *yixin xiangyi* 依心像意.[81] Moreover, even the Liao Area Commander-in-Chief 總管 Tai Buhua 泰不華, whose non-Chineseness is evident in his name, uses the Wu word *peitou* 配頭.[82]

This apparent insensitivity to regional variations in language could be speculatively explained in three ways. Firstly, as Ling did not pass the Imperial examinations until after the works were written, and even then did not leave the Wu-speaking region, he did not win the official postings to other areas of the empire and the prolonged exposure to other regional languages necessary in order to recreate them. Secondly, it could have been a conscious choice made in order to broaden potential readership by not including words from multiple regional languages. Thirdly, and perhaps most likely, this could be a strategy to heighten the verisimilitude of the imaginary "storyteller" and provide him with a consistent voice: the storyteller's regional background mediates the speech of the characters he tells of.

Conclusion- dialect use

[81] Both words: Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3 p.24.
[82] Ibid., p.40.

The evidence suggests that the presence of Wu in *Erpai* did not have a major impact on the potential audience of the text. Firstly, the quantity of Wu words and sentence patterns is simply too low for them to pose a serious barrier to understanding. Moreover, there is evidence that the presence of these words is an aesthetic choice, designed to strengthen the verisimilitude of both the simulated storyteller and character dialogue. The consistent use of one regional language, even where the character speaking is meant to come from a non-Wu area, helps to strengthen the personality of the imaginary storyteller and preserve the illusion that the stories represent a notational account of a storyteller's performance. Ling appears aware of the limited currency of some of the words and phrases he uses, and takes steps to make the meaning clear, either through context or intervention by the storyteller role. The fact that Ling has taken these careful steps suggests that he believed the words and idioms not explained in this way to have a wider currency. As the changes in later anthologies show, however, his judgement was not correct in all of these cases. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the use of regional language in *Erpai* had a major effect on its potential readership.

Allusions in *Erpai*

In order to be accessible to the greatest number of people, the language of a work of vernacular fiction must be pitched at just the right level. As has been demonstrated in

the previous section, it appears that the language in *Erpai* was not too "common" 俗 to have an effect on potential readership. Here, the presence of Classical allusions in the text will be examined to determine if Ling's use of language is too "refined" 雅 to be understood by the less-educated groups in society. As these allusions rely on knowledge of a reservoir of cultural capital shared among those fortunate enough to have a Classical education, their number and difficulty limits the potential audience of a work. Equally, a lack of allusions, or explanations of allusions, may suggest the author had a broader audience in mind.

Nevertheless, the evidence that can be obtained from allusions is inconclusive on its own: there is no satisfactory answer to the issue of who in the late Ming would have understood what allusions. Li Yu notes that:

> It is not that the great *ci* writers of old did not refer to ancient events, did not mention people's names, and did not quote existing lines. But there is a difference in what they referred to, mentioned, and quoted: they did not select abstruse events, they did not search for obscure people, and the lines they quoted used the language of the streets and alleys. Even if occasionally they referred to classic works, they used words which the roots of the ears are accustomed to hearing, and expressions which the tip of the tongue is used to pronouncing;

although such language originates from classic works, it is actually no different to the language of the streets and alleys.

古來填詞之家，未嘗不引古事，未嘗不用人名，未嘗不書現成之句，而所引所用與所書者，則有別焉；其事不取幽深，其人不搜隱僻，其句則采街談巷議。即有時偶涉詩書，亦系耳根聽熟之語，舌端調慣之文，雖出詩書，實與街談巷議無別者。[83]

This clearly shows that certain allusions were commonly known at the time, and may not have presented a particular barrier to understanding; the mere presence of allusions is not enough to prove that the work was aimed at an educated audience. Rather, analysis of the allusions in *Erpai* can show whether Ling took steps to aim his work at less-educated readers; Hanan notes that Feng Menglong's stories "regularly explain facts that the literary tale which served as his source took for granted",[84] interpreting this as a sign that "he is writing down to his audience".[85]

Explanations of allusions

Ling certainly does *appear* to do this on occasion. Perhaps one of the best examples is found in story II-14. The hapless protagonist, Wu Yue 吳約, is exchanging what he

[83] Li Yu, "Cicai di er" 詞采第二, *Xianqing ouji* j.1, *Li Yu quanji* v.3, p.23-4.
[84] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.11.
[85] Ibid.

believes to be love poems with "Lady Zhao" 趙縣君, who is actually part of a criminal gang aiming to trick him out of his money. The poems are delivered by a servant boy, who does not understand the poems and asks Wu to explain them to him:

> The boy looked at it and laughed, "I don't understand the meaning of this poem either." The *Xuanjiao* [Wu] said, "This refers to a story too. The Tang poet Zhang Ji wrote 'Returning your pearls, tears fall from both eyes; I curse that we did not meet before my wedding.' I've just turned the meaning around, saying that as long as the will is there, what does it matter if she's married or not? If Lady Zhao likes me, then when she sees this poem she'll accept the pearls."
>
> 小童看了，笑道「這詩意，我又不曉得了。」宣教道：「也是用着個故事。唐張籍詩云：『還君明珠雙淚垂，恨不相逢未嫁時。』今我反用其意，說道：只要有心，便是嫁了何妨？你縣君若有意於我，見了此詩，此珠必受。」[86]

This appears to be a not particularly subtle device to explain the reference to those who might not have understood, especially as this particular story contains virtually no other allusions, other than well-worn references to the story of the "cowherd and the weaving girl" 牛郎織女 to illustrate love, and "clouds and rain of Mt Wu" 巫山

[86] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ, LMCQJ* v.3, p.250.

雲雨 to refer to sex. However, the obtrusiveness of the device renders this interpretation somewhat unsatisfactory. Perhaps more likely is that it is an effort at authenticity. As Ling says in *Nanyin san lai*:

> Another ridiculous thing: there is not a flower-faced maid or long-footed beardy servant that does not have a vast range of obscure words at their command and is not steeped in knowledge of the works of philosophy and history. Can it be that at that time every house was full of maids as learned as those of [Zheng] Kangcheng, and servants that wrote as well as that of [Xi] Fanghui? It is all because of a lack of understanding of the word "authentic colour" that this defect has developed to this extent.
>
> 又可笑者：花面丫頭，長腳髯奴，無不命詞博奧，子史淹通，何彼時比屋皆康成之婢、方回之奴也？總來不解「本色」二字之意，故流弊至此耳。[87]

The fact that this specific issue is something that Ling was aware of and felt strongly about suggests that these "explanations" are perhaps better interpreted as an expression of Ling's aesthetic ideals of *bense* and *danghang*.

[87] Ling Mengchu, "Tan qu zazha", *Nanyin san lai, LMCQJ* v.4, p.6

"Explanations" given through character dialogue such as the example above are relatively few and far between. Ling also appears to explain allusions through the storyteller with greater regularity. This device allows him to comment on and explain allusions from a position outside the events of the story, similar to the manner in which some Wu terms are explained. A good example of this is in story II-3. It begins with a *ci*, the second stanza of which is given below:

> The *qi* of swords over Fengcheng shoots to the edge of Heaven/ Lei Huan and Zhang Hua share the treasure.
>
> Another day, both arrive by chance/ Under the crossing, a pair of dragons twist.
>
> 豐城劍氣冲天表，雷煥，張華分寶。
>
> 他日偶然齊到，津底雙龍裊。[88]

Evidently, fully understanding the meaning of this *ci* depends on the reader knowing the story behind *chengyu* such as "*qi* of swords above Fengcheng" 豐城劍氣 and "swords meet at Yanjin" 延津劍合, and thus knowing that the "dragons" refer to the two precious swords. However, help for the reader is at hand: the storyteller, after summarizing the simpler first stanza, then asks, "So, what is meant by this '*qi* of

[88] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ, LMCQJ* v.3, p.43.

swords over Fengcheng'?" 那「豐城劍氣」是怎麼說?,[89] and introduces Zhang Hua and Lei Huan. The introductory story then tells the story behind the allusions used in the first poem.[90]

However, another reading of this passage suggests that the "explanation" given by the narrator here is not designed as an explanation at all, but is rather a device that allows Ling to segue smoothly from the opening *ci* into the introductory story while maintaining the illusion that the text is a realistic depiction of a storyteller's performance. This theory is supported by the poem chain that begins story II-5. This story opens with three different *ci* on the theme of the Yuanxiao Festival before moving straight into the main story (there is no introductory story here). The first *ci* is by the Song writer Kang Yuzhi 康與之 (n.d.) (*zi* Boke 伯可), and the storyteller then gives a summary of his life and times before asking:

[89] Ibid.

[90] The account given by Ling appears to be mistaken in several the details. According to the source, *Jin shu* 晉書 (The Book of Jin), the pair of swords that were uncovered were called Tai'e 太阿 and Longquan 龍泉, but Ling gives the names as Chungou 純鈎 and Zhanlu 湛盧. Zhanlu in particular is associated with a different set of stories, such as "Zhanlu moving through the water to Chu" 湛盧水行之楚. Zhang Chenghua points out that Feng Menglong also mixed up his sword names in *Dongzhou lieguo zhi* 東周列國志 (Record of the States of the Eastern Zhou). See Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et.al., "Zhang Hua" 張華, "Liezhuan di liu" 列傳第六, *Jin shu* 晉書 j.36, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL*, p.767; Zhang Chenghua 張橙華, "Qiangu buxiu Wu-Yue jian" 千古不朽吳越劍, pp.53-54.

> "In this *ci*, why does he mention 'the glory of days past, and the reappearance of peace'? It's because of the chaos of [the era of] Jingkang, when Hui[zong] and Qin[zong] were abducted…".
>
> 詞中為何說「舊日風光，太平再見?」蓋因靖康之亂，徽、欽被虜……[91]

By giving the detail about the poet's life and explaining the context behind the poem, the storyteller turns the reader's focus onto the fall of the Northern Song. This leads to the storyteller's judgement on the poem, that "all [the poet] is doing is consoling and amusing himself" 自解自樂而已[92] by trying to recreate the Northern Song capital Bianjing 汴京 in the south. This in turn gives Ling the opportunity to move the chain on by suggesting another poem on a similar topic. The same basic pattern as in the examples given above is evident: Ling presents a poem, has his "storyteller" explain some aspect of it, and then uses the explanation to segue into the next part of the narrative.

The explicated poems are followed by allusions which are not explained. Ling reproduces a poem by Wang Yuyu 王禹玉 (1019-1085) which contains a series of allusions, such as a reference to an occasion on which Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝

[91] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.86.
[92] Ibid.

(157 BCE-87 BCE) held a victory banquet with his ministers on the Fen river 汾水 and composed the poem *Qiufeng ci* 秋風辭 (Autumn Wind).[93] Ling consistently explains allusions and references where the explanation can move the plot along, but shows a similar consistency in not explaining them where they do not have this function.

Retained allusions

The above examples all represent allusions and poems that Ling has consciously added to his stories. There are also instances where he has retained Classical allusions that are found in his sources. The best example of this is in II-6, where he reproduces in full a letter home written by Liu Cuicui 劉翠翠 and collected in *Jiandeng xinhua*.[94] A short extract is sufficient to illustrate the depth and quantity of allusions it uses:

> …Now, [it is similar to when] Yang Su looked at the mirror and returned [Xu Deyan's] wife, [and] when Wang Dun opened the pavilion and released his courtesans. On the Isle of Peng, there is an enactment of a past agreement; on the rivers of Hunan, there is a meeting of old friends…

[93] Ibid., p.88.
[94] Qu You 瞿佑, "Cuicui zhuan" 翠翠傳, *Jiandeng xinhua* 剪燈新話 j.3, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL*, p.779.

今則楊素覽鏡而歸妻，王敦開閣而放妓。蓬島踐當時之約，瀟湘有故人之逢……[95]

The letter contains around 20 allusions in all, and it seems highly unlikely that Ling, as he transformed his source into the vernacular, could not have realised the demands this would place on a less-educated audience. In other words, the retention of the letter should be seen as an aesthetic choice, just like the addition of allusions not present in his sources. In fact, Ling even remarks in his marginal commentary that it is full of the "tricks of an old pedant, but it would be groundless to alter it, and so for now it has been left in its original form" 老學究伎俩，然改之無端，故仍其舊.[96] Significantly, the stated reason for his dislike of these "tricks" is aesthetic rather than due to the difficulty of the language: he does not see why the telling of feelings between the human world and the netherworld should be described with "empty words that are tiresome" 虛文可厭.[97] The retention of this letter is a strong indication that Ling may have had a Classically-educated audience in mind when he wrote *Erpai*.

A further indication that Ling believed at least a portion of his readers to be familiar with a wide variety of poetry from past masters is given in the *fanli* 凡例 (writer's

[95] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.116.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

notes) to the first volume. Note number three states "Here and there, I have adopted existing [poems], taking ones which happen to match the scene and using them. This is an established practice of fiction writers: please do not resent me for plagiarism." 間有採用舊者，取一時切景而及之，亦小說家舊例，勿嫌剽竊.[98] This is a hint that at least part of the intended audience would have been educated enough not just to understand the poems, but also to recognise which poems were Ling's own and which were works by other authors.

Word games

The evidence in the *fanli* suggests that a solid and broad knowledge of Classical poetry was expected of the audience. This expectation is also evident in the way that Ling plays word games with his readers which require active knowledge of the Classics to understand. In I-8, the storyteller describes a General Wu 烏將軍. Part of the set piece description is given below:

> On both cheeks, nothing but "is it not a delight…"
>
> His whole body is covered in "virtue is light as…"
>
> 兩頰無非「不亦悅」,

[98] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.2.

通身都是「德輶如」[99]

The phrases *buyi yue* 不亦悦 and *de youru* 德輶如 are incomplete quotations from the *Lun yu* and the *Shi jing* respectively. To understand the poem, the reader must complete the quotes to get *hu* 乎, homophonous with *hu* 鬍 (beard), in the first instance and *mao* 毛 (hair) in the second. Doing so requires the type of thorough, memorised knowledge of these classic texts that is gained through the traditional education system. While these are quotes from major texts, the expectation that the reader will have active, rather than passive, knowledge of them suggests that they would have received a Classical education.

Conclusion- allusions

The above analysis of the use of Classical allusions in *Pai'an jingqi* shows that Ling has added allusions that were not present in the original source texts in the form of poems and couplets recited by the storyteller, showing evidence of a conscious aesthetic decision to include them. While some of these allusions come "prepackaged" in poems by past masters, such as those in the Wang Yuyu poem noted above, others, such as the *ci* describing the two precious swords found near Fengcheng, are the result of Ling's own creative work. This process illustrates that

[99] Ibid., p.119.

the process of rewriting a literary language tale into a vernacular story does not necessarily make the finished product either less "literary" or easier to read when taken as a whole, despite the greater ease of reading the vernacular as compared to the literary language. The *huaben* is formally heterogeneous, and any widening of the potential audience relative to the literary language source achieved by the use of the vernacular is counterbalanced by the constricting influence of the inclusion of more Classical allusions than were present in the source.

As well as these additions, Ling has transferred Classical allusions present in the source into his work. Ling's marginal commentary on the letter quoted above shows that this was no mindless copying: he did consider altering the letter, if for aesthetic rather than practical reasons, but decided against it. Therefore, the retention of allusions found in the source texts should be viewed as a conscious choice. Furthermore, explanations of allusions given through character dialogue and the simulated storyteller are better understood as being aesthetically and functionally motivated. Of course, they would have had a secondary effect of making the stories easier to read in addition to their primary effects, but the key implication of this reading of the "explanations" is that they do not represent Ling catering to a less-educated readership.

However this evidence on its own is insufficient for several reasons. Firstly, there is the assumption that the allusions are designed to be understood, or that it particularly matters if they are not. The majority of the allusions are found in poems and parallel prose that are not critical to the understanding of the story: it is possible to read and enjoy the stories without them, as demonstrated by their removal in some later anthologies.[100] It is interesting, in this light, to note that the poems explained to the serving boy in II-14 are more relevant to the plot than others. Finally, this focus on the presence of Classical allusions should not overshadow their absence: overall *Erpai* contains very few Classical allusions.

In conclusion therefore, while the potential audience may not have been narrowed down significantly by the Classical allusions in the work, that they were added, retained, and not consistently explained suggests that Ling did not intend his stories for a less-educated audience. This in turn suggests that at least part of the audience he had in mind for *Erpai* would have had some level of Classical education.

Orientation towards specific groups

[100] Cheng Guofu, *Sanyan-Erpai chuanbo yanjiu*, p.40.

In addition to the evidence considered above, which serves to hint at the intended audience by narrowing down the potential audience, there are also features of the text that show an orientation towards specific social groups.

Publisher's note

The first of these to be considered is An Shaoyun's publisher's note. An visualises the audience in general terms, as "readers" 覽者.[101] No specific group of people is singled out: in other late-Imperial works publishers would often address certain demographics, for example "gentlemen" 士子 or "ignorant men and women" 愚夫愚妇.[102] He also mentions the work's didactic content: "[Ling Mengchu] originally wished to create a virtuous item that would advise and admonish, and swore not to become a criminal against decent taste" 原欲作規箴之善物, 矢不為風雅之罪人.[103] While the reference to the work's morals is not particularly surprising, the focus on Ling's intentions and not, as in some notes ostensibly aimed at a wide audience,[104] on the effect the moralising in the stories has on the reader, shows that An envisaged the audience having an intellectual interest in issues beyond the text itself, such as its genesis and the motivation behind it. To finish off, he describes the reader

[101] An Shaoyun 安少雲, in Ling Mengchu, *Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇, *Guben xiaoshuo congkan*, series 13 v.1, p.1.
[102] McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China", p.159.
[103] An Shaoyun, in Ling Mengchu, *Pai'an jingqi*, *Guben xiaoshuo congkan*, series 13 v.1, p.1.
[104] McLaren, "Constructing New Reading Publics in Late Ming China", p.161.

"appreciating" the work in a manner "no different to collecting pearls" 覽者賞鑒何異藏珠.[105] An evidently imagined the work being consumed by people who possessed, or aspired to possess, the connoisseurial ability to value the story as a work of art. An Shaoyun seems to have been marketing Ling's work at relatively educated, sophisticated readers.

This is made clear by a comparison with another publisher's note, preceding a Wanjuan lou 萬卷樓 edition of *Sanguo yanyi*:

> … to aid with parsing sentences there are circles and dots, pronunciation is marked on difficult characters, geography is explained, Classical references have been verified, missing or sketchy [passages] have been supplemented, the chapters have full illustrations…
>
> ……俾句讀有圈點，難字有音注，地里[理]有釋義，典故有考證，缺略有增補，節目有全像……[106]

[105] An Shaoyun, in Ling Mengchu, *Pai'an jingqi*, *Guben xiaoshuo congkan*, series 13 v.1, p.1.
[106] Zhou Yuejiao 周曰校, in Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, *Xinkan jiaozheng guben dazi yinshi Sanguo Zhi tongsu yanyi* 新刊校正古本大字音釋三國志通俗演義, cover page.

The focus afforded to aids for the reader here shows quite a different emphasis to that in An's note, suggesting that the two works were aimed at two distinct groups of readers.

Marginal commentary and didactic content

The next feature is marginal commentary. This, along with poems delivered by the storyteller, is more preoccupied with making entertaining asides and didactic points than helping the reader understand the text. These didactic points are often directed at specific groups of people, giving a hint as to the intended audience of the stories. For example, story II-31 makes repeated direct pleas to officials to heed the message of the story. The commentator remarks "Those implementing the law should give this some reflection" 司法者宜加少省 , "This is something those in charge should know" 有司所宜知之; in the same vein, the storyteller says "What officials must know is…" 做官的人要曉得…… .[107] II-21 contains similar commentary. The burden of this story is to persuade criminal law officials to be cautious when hearing cases in order to avoid wronging people. The commentator notes "Criminal officials, take heed" 刑官念之, while the last line of the final poem is "A word to criminal officials- you must be careful/ The jails are full of wronged souls" 寄語刑官須仔細，獄中儘是負冤魂.[108] This is a strong hint that officials were part of the intended audience.

[107] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ, LMCQJ* v.3, p.514; p.516.
[108] Ibid., p.370; p.386.

Similar commentary is aimed at women, suggesting that they too are part of the intended audience. In I-16, the storyteller argues that women should not get involved in things that do not concern them, and should be discreet and cautious in their manner, especially when their husband is away from home. Ling, as commentator, adds "This is good advice. Women should listen to this." 好話，婦人宜聽. A similar comment is found in I-26, where the storyteller advises women against visiting temples as they may arouse the lust of the monks.[109]

A third demographic to whom didactic messages are frequently addressed is young men. Story II-14 ends with the plea, "I urge the young sons of others: those whose blood is still hot, who lust after beautiful women, who are unsatisfied with their lot, and who do not know what is good for them, take a lesson from this" 奉勸人家少年子弟每，血氣未定，貪婬好色，不守本分，不知利害的，宜以此為鑒.[110] Story II-8, meanwhile, warns young people of specific tricks that gamblers may play on them with loaded dice, and then concludes, "I urge the young sons of others, do not foolishly hanker after [the property of] others!" 奉勸人家子弟，莫痴心想別人的.[111]

[109] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ, LMCQJ* v.2, p.230; p.402.
[110] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ, LMCQJ* v.3, p.257.
[111] Ibid., p.140.

Notably, there are no instances in which members of the merchant class or other non-elite groups are addressed directly in this way, despite the large number of stories featuring merchant characters providing fertile ground for such comments. This suggests that the work was aimed at an elite audience, and not at members of the lower classes.

Conclusion

The evidence gathered in each section above is not conclusive when considered in isolation: each angle is limited in a different way. However, when they are combined a picture of the likely intended audience begins to emerge. A representative member of this audience would have come from a family of some means, able to purchase the relatively costly editions positioned towards the mid-high end of the market that *Pai'an jingqi* was first published in. They would not, however, have had to be wealthy enough to purchase the finest editions available. This implies a comfortable literati or merchant background. The occasional criticism of what Ling saw as the usurpation of the proper, Confucian, order of things by a nakedly money-centred value system, however, suggests that the merchants Ling was writing for were "aspirational" ones, looking to break into the still-prestigious official class. The lack of marginal commentary or moralising aimed at merchants suggests that they were not the primary intended audience.

That officials were part of the intended audience seems beyond doubt, especially given the marginal comments and interpretations aimed at warning or encouraging officials. In addition to these groups, it seems clear from the moral lessons of certain stories that young students of means were part of the intended audience as well. The wives and concubines of merchants or literati with the necessary means would have made up a subset of the audience, as demonstrated by the marginal commentary aimed specifically at women.

The representative intended reader would have been proficient enough to read in the vernacular for leisure without the need for paratextual aids such as explanatory marginal commentary or illustrations above the text. It seems likely that they would have had a reasonable level of education in the Classics, enabling them to understand some if not all of the allusions with which Ling sprinkled the text. It is unlikely that the occasional appearances of Wu vocabulary would have caused them any significant problem. In Idema's terms, they would belong to the "fully literate" or "highly literate" groups. This education would have helped them develop the ability to read on a relatively sophisticated level and develop an interest in questions of the text's genesis and the author's intentions, as hinted at by An Shaoyun's publisher's note.

Of course, the individual presented above is a composite picture of an imagined "ideal" reader: it is certain that many of the actual readers of the text, even when it was first released, did not tick all of these boxes. Not every reader would have understood 100% of the text, and it is likely that Ling, with his background in publishing, realised this. It is not necessary to understand every Classical allusion in the work in order to derive enjoyment from it, and equally, while the exact meaning of some dialect phrases may pass some readers by, they would have been able to appreciate the vernacular colour they bring without losing track of the story. The differences in life experience and education between each individual reader mean that it is perhaps better to visualise the intended audience as a large number of fluid concentric circles, with the "ideal" reader at the centre, rather than a clearly-defined solid block.

This further underlines that the intended readership would not have been a homogenous group. Ling's intended audience included a range of figures, from powerful officials to wealthy and aspirational members of the merchant class, women in well-off households, fiction enthusiasts, and scholars looking for some light relief from the search for examination success. However, it seems unlikely that the text in any of the physical forms known about at present would originally have been aimed

at "shopkeepers, shop assistants, minor functionaries, and the like",[112] or any other social group without a solid financial and educational background. Ling seems to have been writing *Erpai* at the mid-to-upper echelons of his society. This conclusion, while focused tightly on *Erpai*, is also relevant to the question of the readership of vernacular fiction more generally, implying that despite its persistant "common" image, vernacular fiction was intended to be read and enjoyed by members of the educated elite.

[112] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.11.

Chapter Three: Textual Roles and Didacticism

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CHAPTER 3

Ventriloquism, moral didacticism, and political discursion in *Erpai*

The aim of this chapter is to examine the didactic component of Ling Mengchu's reimagination of the vernacular story. This is accomplished by analysis of the ways in which Ling takes advantage of his textual roles to privilege the didacticism of the stories and make it more effective. To enable a more precise analysis, a distinction is drawn between two types of didactic content, termed here "moral didacticism" and "political discursion". "Moral didacticism" refers to the use of the stories to promote and assert the implied author's interpretation of general moral and ethical principles; "political discursion" on the other hand refers to the use of the stories to expound the implied author's views on specific political issues. When referring to both types of didactic content, the general term "didacticism" is used.

The analysis is focused on Ling's textual roles of writer, storyteller and commentator. The "writer" role is defined as Ling's actions in adapting the stories found in his source materials. The "storyteller" role refers to Ling's use of the persona of the storyteller: the "storyteller's manner". Finally, the "commentator" role refers to the marginal and interlinear commentary on the works added by Ling's commentator persona. The roles could also be described as deciding what is in the story (the writer), how it is told (the storyteller), and how it is remarked upon (the commentator). The "writer" role plays a smaller part in the didacticism of *Erpai* than

the storyteller and commentator roles. The effect of the storyteller and commentator roles in enhancing the didacticism of the stories is analused by viewing them as "dummies" under the theoretical framework of ventriloquism. Before presenting this framework, however, the terms "moral didacticism" and "political discursion" will be defined and the history of utilitarian literary concepts in China examined.

Defining "moral didacticism" and "political discursion"

A clearer understanding of the terms "moral didacticism" and "political discursion" can be gained through reference to theories of propaganda. Without claiming that *Erpai* is itself a work of propaganda, certain insights of propaganda theories are also relevant to didactic literature, which shares with propaganda the intent to persuade the reader, or reaffirm in them certain ideas. Jacques Ellul's seminal text *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* makes four distinctions between different types of propaganda: political and sociological, agitation and integration, vertical and horizontal, and rational and irrational. The most relevant of these in this context are the distinctions between political and sociological propaganda and agitation and integration propaganda. Firstly, political propaganda

> involves techniques of influence employed by a government, a party, an administration, a pressure group, with a view to changing the behavior of the public. The choice of methods

> used is deliberate and calculated; the desired goals are clearly distinguished and quite precise, though generally limited…Political propaganda can be either strategic or tactical. The former establishes the general line, the array of arguments, the staggering of the campaigns; the latter seeks to obtain immediate results within that framework.[1]

Clearly, *Erpai*'s "political discursion", though on a smaller scale, is analogous to what Ellul calls "tactical political propaganda": the desire to persuade people of specific political points. On the other hand, "sociological propaganda" is

> the group of manifestations by which any society seeks to integrate the maximum number of individuals into itself, to unify its members' behavior according to a pattern, to spread its style of life abroad, and thus to impose itself on other groups. We call this phenomenon "sociological" propaganda, to show, first of all, that the entire group, consciously or not, expresses itself in this fashion; and to indicate, secondly, that its influence aims much more at an entire style of life than at opinions or even one particular course of behavior.[2]

This type of propaganda shows similarities to *Erpai*'s "moral didacticism" in that it is generalised and seeks to regulate behaviour. However, sociological propaganda is also characterised by being a broader societal phenomenon that "springs up

[1] Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, p.62.
[2] Ibid., p.62-63.

spontaneously" and is "not the result of deliberate propaganda action";[3] therefore, it is not possible to characterise an individual work as a piece of sociological propaganda. Rather, this theory diffuses the agency behind the propaganda between the creator and the society they live in, holding that any work within a given society tends to embody and promote the values of that society spontaneously. Ling's stories, while they certainly do embody certain of the values of his society, also go a step further in their conscious promotion of moral values.

The next distinction relevant here is more straightforward: that between "agitation propaganda" and "integration propaganda". As the name suggests, agitation propaganda is often "subversive propaganda and has the stamp of opposition"; Ellul gives Lenin, Hitler, and Mao as examples of 20th century leaders who have used this approach effectively. This propaganda sets itself against the prevailing political consensus and aims to persuade people to overthrow it. In contrast to it lies the more subtle propaganda of integration, a "propaganda of conformity"[4] which

> aims at making the individual participate in his society in every way. It is a long-term propaganda, a self-reproducing propaganda that seeks to obtain stable behavior, to adapt the

[3] Ibid., p.64.
[4] Ibid., p.74.

> individual to his everyday life, to reshape his thoughts and behavior in terms of the permanent social setting.[5]

On a smaller scale, this distinction corresponds roughly to the distinction between *Erpai*'s political discursion and moral didacticism. Obviously, the parallel can only be taken so far: Ling's biography shows that he was anything but a revolutionary demagogue, and the political points made in *Erpai* amount to advocacy of mild reform of specific policies at most, with no call for systemic changes. However, what *Erpai*'s political discursions do have in common with the propaganda of agitation is the fact that they are issued from a position outside government, from which he implicitly or explicitly rejects the policies adopted by those in power and proposes alternatives. Meanwhile, the moral didacticism in the works generally shares the conformism of the propaganda of integration, in that characters are expected to play out their predetermined social roles without complaint.

Taking both distinctions into account, *Erpai*'s moral didacticism could be classed as "conscious sociological propaganda with integrationist tendencies", while his political discursion could be "tactical political propaganda with agitationist tendencies". In practice, given that in the Confucian tradition "socio-political and

[5] Ibid., p.75.

moral issues are closely interrelated",[6] such a binary division may not be desirable in all situations. However, in many cases the distinction is helpful in analysing the mechanics of Ling's stories. Though moral didacticism and political discursion may differ in purpose and manner of expression, they share one fundamental feature, both being a product of concern for the effect that a piece of literature has or is intended to have upon its audience.

The history of utilitarian literary concepts in China

This concern is visible throughout the history of Chinese literature from the *Shi jing* onwards. Ling's works, written during a time of national decline, are part of a long tradition of attempts to improve society through literature: though ancient Chinese literature might have "occasionally have been intended to entertain, lurking not far beneath its diverting surface was a lesson that gave meaning and purpose to its art."[7]

Confucius is perhaps the figure that has had the most influence in promoting this utilitarian view of literature. The canonisation and exegeses of the *Shi jing* made it "increasingly difficult to separate *Shih-ching* [*Shi jing*] poetry from the moral lessons of Confucius's philosophy";[8] Confucius's statement in *Lun yu* 2:2 that "The Odes are

[6] Liu, James, *Chinese Theories of Literature*, p.111.
[7] Riegel, "*Shih-ching* Poetry and Didacticism in Ancient Chinese Literature", p.98.
[8] Ibid., p.99.

three hundred in number. They can be summed up in one phrase, 'Swerving not from the right path'." 詩三百，一言以蔽之，曰：思無邪[9] is a concise illustration of this phenomenon. The aesthetic aspect of the poems is not mentioned, overshadowed by the beneficial effect they may have on the reader.

This approach to poetry is evident in the subsequent exegeses of the *Shi jing*, especially those of the Mao school, and was a powerful influence on the development of their role within the Confucian canon. Within the *Lun yu*, there is "a clear chronological progression in the attitudes towards the Odes…from the Odes as music to the Odes as rhetoric to the Odes as texts to study."[10] Reflecting this progression, the "Da xu" 大序 (Great Preface) to the *Shi jing* affirmed a moralistic reading of the poems, transforming the statement "the poem articulates what is intently on the mind" 詩言志[11] into a "full fledged didactic statement of literature".[12] The nature of the moralism in Confucian interpretations of the *Shi jing* is also worthy of note: it is reminiscent of Ellul's "sociological propaganda" in that the purpose is "not to make people understand the Good, but rather to internalise the Good involuntarily so that it

[9] Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects, Chinese-English Edition*, p.13. (both Chinese and translation)
[10] Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality: Reading, Exegesis, and Hermeneutics in Traditional China*, p.48.
[11] Stephen Owen's translation of the phrase from the *Shang shu* 尚書/*Shu jing* 書經. See Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought,* p.40.
[12] Cai, Zong-qi, "The Making of a Critical System: Concepts of Literature in *Wenxin diaolong* and Earlier Texts", p.45.

becomes “natural” for them”,[13] and that the instruction was “not supposed to be coercive”.[14]

This focus on the effect of the poems on the reader was not solely the result of Confucian interpretation, however: the authors of certain poems also clearly intended their work to have an effect in society. It is noticeable that these pieces are characterised by their “political discursion”, rather than the “moral didacticism” read into poems such as “Guan ju” 關雎 (“Guan” call the ospreys). For example number 195, *Xiao min* 小旻 (Small Heaven) rages against bad advice which is leading a king astray. In this extract, the polemical character of the poem is extremely pronounced:

> Plans of benefit are not followed/ But yet, those with none are put to use;
>
> Considering their plans and counsels/ I am filled with much agony.[15]

> 謀臧不從，不臧覆用。
>
> 我視謀猶，亦孔之邛。[16]

[13] Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought*, p.40.
[14] Ibid., p.45.
[15] Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, p.174.
[16] Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元, ed., *Shi jing zhu xi* 《詩經》注析, p.589.

The poem's message of despair at the poor counsel of the ministers could not be more explicit: this is poetry as political instrument.

With the full weight of Confucian orthodoxy behind it, the privileged position accorded to the utilitarian function of literature would be developed and consolidated by many subsequent thinkers and writers. Wang Chong 王充 (27 CE- ?) developed the basic concept expressed by Confucius's "swerving not from the right path" to put forward an early version of an argument later echoed by Feng Menglong.[17] In his work *Lun heng* 論衡 (On Balance), he says:

> There are patterns (*wen*) of Heaven and patterns of Man; how can these merely be the pointless splashing of ink and twiddling with a brush in order to create a pretty spectacle! It records people's deeds and passes on people's names. Good people wish to be written of, and so strive to do good; evil people do not wish to be written of, and so make efforts to restrain themselves. Therefore, the pen of the literary writer encourages good and punishes evil!
>
> 天文人文，夫豈徒調墨弄筆，為美麗之觀哉！載人之行，傳人之名也。善人愿載，思勉為善；邪人惡載，力自禁裁。然則文人之筆，勸善懲惡也！[18]

[17] i.e., that literature can actively inspire people to do good. Feng Menglong makes this argument in the preface to *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說. See Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646.
[18] Wang Chong 王充, "Yiwen pian" 佚文篇, *Lun heng* 論衡 j.20, p.409.

As well as the prominence given to the influence of literature, of particular note is the disparaging reference to the "splashing" and "twiddling" that characterises literature without purpose: such literature is by implication not worthy of the celestial associations of more serious works, or even of the term "*wen*" 文 itself. Though, like Confucius, Wang Chong sees the value of literature as lying wholly in its social purpose, his text reveals a greater exploration of its possibilities. Didactic literature leaves the realm of the abstract to play a constant and active role in society, entering the realm of practical everyday moral decisions through the awe its power inspires. The idea that literature should "encourage good and punish evil" is echoed in *Erpai*'s aim to "encourage and warn" its readers.

Liu Xie's influential work *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) illustrates the power of utilitarian ideas of literature, even over theorists who were not staunch utilitarians. While the utilitarian function of literature is "the least important part of Liu's concept of literature",[19] he does nothing to contradict it. Instead, he absorbs it into his theories, assimilating the "basic model of understanding literature as a harmonizing process" from earlier utilitarian theories.[20]

[19] Cai, Zong-qi, "The Making of a Critical System: Concepts of Literature in *Wenxin diaolong* and Earlier Texts", p.54.
[20] Ibid., p.46.

Moreover, Liu also makes unambiguously didactic assertions such as "the function of… literary writing, is an offshoot of the function of the Classics" 唯文章之用，實經典枝條.[21] The *zan* 贊 after passage 49 puts a similar view across in somewhat clearer terms:

> If a writer has no capacity for practical affairs then, despite his laborious carving/ What good will his excellence be to people?
> Literature should not only be an ornament for its creator/ But should serve also to glorify the state.[22]
>
> 雕而不器，貞幹誰則。
> 豈無華身，亦有光國。[23]

Like Wang Chong, Liu Xie disdained frivolity and insubstantiality: whatever other theories of literature he advanced in *Wenxin diaolong*, it remains evident that to be truly worthy of the name, literature must have a wider purpose. The idea of a dichotomy in literature between useless decoration and moral substance was one revisited by a succession of critics, though Song dynasty scholar Zhou Dunyi's 周敦

[21] Shih, Vincent Yu-chung, trans., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p.4; Liu Xie, "Xuzhi di wushi" 序志第五十, *Wenxin diaolong* j.10, p.600.
[22] Shih, Vincent Yu-chung, trans., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, p.268.
[23] Liu Xie, "Chengqi di sishijiu" 程器第四十九, *Wenxin diaolong* j.10, p.600.

頤 (1017-1073) formulation of it is perhaps the clearest, becoming a well-known phrase:

> Literature is that which carries the Way. If the wheels and axles of a carriage are decorated but people do not use them, the decoration is in vain; is this not even truer of an empty carriage? Literary words are an art. The Way and moral virtue are substance.
>
> 文，所以載道也。輪轅飾而人弗庸，徒飾也，況虛車乎？文辭，藝也；道德，實也。[24]

Zhou Dunyi went further than Liu Xie and Wang Chong by explicitly defining literature as a tool for the propagation of moral substance. Though Ling Mengchu despised the Neo-Confucianist school that Zhou Dunyi helped found, echoes of Zhou's ideas can be seen in Ling's belief that one of the defining features of fiction was its didacticism. Zhou's definition opens up conceptual space for the possibility that as a tool, literature itself can be dispensed with, and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) duly took this theory to its extreme conclusion by arguing that "literature is harmful to the Way" 作文害道.[25]

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[24] Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, *Zhouzi tongshu* 周子通書 j.28, p.39.
[25] Cheng Yi 程頤, *Er Cheng yishu* 二程遺書, j.18, p.290.

In addition to the theorists described above formulating a utilitarian concept of literature based around moral didacticism, there was also a rich tradition of literature being used for political discursion. The *Shi jing* poems cited above is an early example of this. Du Fu also wrote poems to advance his opinions on specific political points, sometimes very directly. "Sai Luzi" 塞蘆子 (Blocking Luzi Pass) offers analysis of military strategy on the northwestern border, as this extract shows:

> Shi Siming has carved off Huaizhou and Weizhou,
>
> Gao Xiuyan has not ceased moving west.
>
> If they come bending around the Great Barrens,
>
> the loss of Yao and Han Passes would be nothing by comparison.
>
> Yanzhou is the northern door to Qin,
>
> one can still rely on its defense.[26]

> 邊兵盡東征，城內空荊杞。
>
> 思明割懷衛，秀岩西未已。
>
> 回略大荒來，崤函蓋虛爾。
>
> 延州秦北戶，關防猶可倚。[27]

[26] Owen, trans., *The Poetry of Du Fu* v.4, p.264.
[27] Du Fu 杜甫, "Sai Luzi" 塞蘆子, *Du shi jingquan* 杜詩鏡銓, p.131-132.

The practical function of the poem is especially pronounced here. In a similar vein, his poem "Liu Huamen" 留花門 (Detained in Huamen) expresses his unease about the Emperor's alliance of convenience with the Uighurs.[28]

Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) also wrote poetry of specific political criticism, such as this work opposing harsh salt laws:

> An old man of seventy, sickle at his waist/ Feels guilty the spring mountain bamboo and bracken are sweet.
>
> It's not that the music of Shao has made him lose his sense of taste/ It's just that he's eaten his food for three months without salt.[29]

> 老翁七十自腰鐮，慚愧春山笋蕨甜。
>
> 豈是聞韶解忘味，遁來三月食無鹽。[30]

This work, and others, led to Su Shi facing accusations of slandering the emperor in an incident that became known as the "crow terrace poetry case" (*wutai shi an* 烏臺詩案). However, the court did not understand other criticisms inserted by Su Shi into

[28] Du Fu, "Liu Huamen" 留花門, *Du shi jingquan*, p.201-202.
[29] Hartman, "Poetry and Politics in 1079: The Crow Terrace Poetry Case of Su Shih", p.23.
[30] Su Shi 蘇軾, "Shancun wujue" 山村五絕, *Su Shi quanji jiaozhu* 蘇軾全集校注 j.9, p.869.

his poetry through the use of borrowed rhyme schemes,[31] showing the elaborate ways that hidden political discursion could be put forward.

Fiction, too, was used as a vehicle for political discursion, or at least interpreted as such. For example, Li Zhi's preface to *Shuihu zhuan* ascribes the writing of the work as being down to an "outpouring of indignation" 發憤 at the subjugation of China to foreign rule in Southern Song and Yuan times.[32] Certainly, the authorities recognised its potential for sedition, and it was banned repeatedly in the late Ming.[33] This interpretation of *Shuihu zhuan* is part of a wider tradition of using dramatised past events to comment indirectly on contemporary politics.

Of course, the utilitarian conception of literature, in which the importance of moral didacticism and political discursion was stressed, was only one of many competing theories of literature circulating in pre-modern China. That much is evident through the way in which the theorists quoted above defined their ideas in part by opposition to what they believed "literature" was not, and there are many examples of works which do not fit this model. However, over more than a millennium a dominant discourse was built up by a range of theorists, philosophers, and writers, in which

[31] Murck, *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent*, p.92.
[32] Li Zhi, *Fen shu* j.3, *Li Zhi wenji* v.1, p.101-102.
[33] See Wang Liqi ed., *Yuan Ming Qing san dai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao (zengding ben)*, p.16-17.

literature's role as an agent of moral improvement was foregrounded. The support of Confucianism made it more powerful, and its hegemony was such that it

> remained practically sacrosanct, so that critics who basically believed in other concepts rarely dared to repudiate it openly, but paid lip service to it while actually focusing attention on other concepts, or interpreted Confucius's words in such a way as to lend support to nonpragmatic theories, or simply kept silent about the pragmatic concept while developing others.[34]

The very fact that this discourse was so dominant creates problems when analysing didacticism in works such as *Erpai*: overt statements of utilitarian intent made by authors cannot necessarily be accepted at face value. For example, Mei Sheng's 枚乘（d. 140 BCE）*fu* "Qifa" 七發 (Seven Stimuli), which takes the form of a Wu 吳 native attempting to cure the illness of a Chu 楚 prince through rich descriptions, ends with an ostensibly moralistic segment. However, Burton Watson is not convinced by this, interpreting it as the poet being "anxious only to make his bow to didactic convention as quickly as possible and be done with the piece",[35] while

[34] Liu, James, *Theories of Chinese Literature*, p.111.
[35] Watson, *Early Chinese Literature,* p.268.

viewing the framework of the piece as a "pretext for the poet to display his skill on a series of conventional themes".[36]

It is not only later scholars that have pronounced themselves unconvinced by certain explicit utilitarian claims. Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE) was another noted *fu* writer. He criticised Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179 BCE – 117 BCE), saying that his "writings were beautiful but lacking in practical use" 文麗用寡,[37] showing that he was not convinced by the utilitarian intent Sima claimed for his *fu* such as "Shanglin fu" 上林賦 (*Fu* on the Imperial Park). Yang Xiong did not stop at criticizing one *fu* writer; he disowned the whole genre, describing it as being like "boys carving insects on seals…This is not something that a grown man does." 童子雕蟲篆刻 …… 壯夫不為也.[38] This is possibly due to his somewhat conflicted beliefs that "the proper function of the rhapsody…was to influence human behaviour", but that "the genre was an ineffective ethical instrument".[39] This comment reveals another complicating factor in the discussion, that of the roles that specific genres were expected to play. Clearly, for Yang Xiong the *fu* genre in of itself was inextricably associated with flippant, decorative writing that lacked moral substance.

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Yang Xiong 揚雄, "Jun zi" 君子, *Fayan* 法言 j.9, p.319.
[38] Yang Xiong, "Wu zi" 吾子, *Fayan* j.2, p.25.
[39] Knechtges, *The Han rhapsody: a study of the 'Fu' of Yang Hsiung [53 B.C.-A.D.18]*, p.96.

Critical views on didacticism in vernacular fiction

For Ling, fiction was a genre characterised by both entertainment and didacticism, as demonstrated in Chapter One.[40] However, an examination of critical views shows that didacticism in vernacular fiction is rarely straightforward. Andrew Plaks tackles the subject at length in regard to the literati novel in his work *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu Ta Ch'i-shu*. Plaks is largely sceptical about the Buddhist didactic message in these novels, noting of *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase) that

> the use of Buddhist didactics had been incorporated into the generic outlines of the novel as a conventional narrative framework to provide fixed structural outlines even where the doctrinal message does not really apply.[41]

In other words, by the sixteenth century Buddhist didacticism in the novel was more of a plot device than a serious exercise. This scepticism is not limited to Plaks, who notes that other readers regard the didacticism in *Jin ping mei* as "an elaborate excuse on the part of the author for writing what is essentially a work of pornography".[42] Plaks explains the unconvincing nature of much of this didacticism by noting that

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[40] See p.65.
[41] Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu Ta Ch'i-Shu*, p.137.
[42] Ibid.

"these didactic pronouncements are themselves sooner or later subjected to some of the same ironic erosion directed toward the failings of the central figures."[43] In his work on *Sanguo yanyi*, Andrew Lo takes a similar view, arguing that a distinction between judgements that are explicitly stated and those that are implied by the text is necessary; the explicit *lunzan* 論贊 are often not reflected in the text.[44] Plaks agrees, concluding that "solutions held out by pseudo-oracular didactic voices must be worked out on the narrative level in terms of the dynamics of human action and consequences".[45]

It is important to note, however, that Plaks does not deny that *Jin ping mei* has a moral message, just that it is not necessarily the Buddhist one that is claimed explicitly. He argues persuasively that due in part to the "reinterpretation of the Buddhist framework in terms of essentially moral rather than metaphysical meaning",[46] the "entire novel can be read as a gloss on this phrase [*qijia* 齊家 'to put one's home in order']"[47] from the Confucian classic *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning). In addition to this moral reading, Plaks also supports reading it as a commentary on contemporary political affairs based on the "identification of Hsi-men Ch'ing [Ximen

[43] Ibid., p.506.
[44] Lo, "*San-kuo chih yen-i* and *Shui-hu chuan* in the Context of Historiography: An Interpretive Study", pp.58-65.
[45] Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu Ta Ch'i-Shu*, p.509.
[46] Ibid., p.155.
[47] Ibid., p.165.

Qing] with the perennial image of the bad ruler",[48] and the way in which the end of the novel plays out against a background of dynastic decline and foreign invasion. In Plaks's scheme, the novel still has a didactic function of "encouragement and warning", just not in the way that it explicitly claims to.

Robert Hegel makes the case for the didactic nature of vernacular fiction in *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*. This work examines several seventeenth-century novels, concluding that the works "are inevitably didactic" and "speak directly to their times with … political and intellectual seriousness".[49] Hegel argues against the assumption that authors of the period "did not treat vernacular fiction as a serious art form and … one ought not to understand their moralization as serious either".[50] Instead, he holds that the vernacular novel was used by displaced literati to express concerns and ambitions that were denied a more conventional outlet,[51] and was considered "a vehicle worthy of the most profound political, social, and psychological insights".[52] For Hegel, didacticism is "a logical product of the Confucian literary tradition in which most writing embodies a moral message";[53] didacticism is an

[48] Ibid., p.164.
[49] Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, p.xi.
[50] Ibid., p.49.
[51] Ibid., p.217.
[52] Ibid., p.223.
[53] Ibid., p.175.

integral part of the literary discourse built up by the writers and thinkers analysed above, and in practice does not have to be the exclusive function of a given work.

Timothy Wong, however, puts forward quite a different view on didacticism in *huaben* in his article "Entertainment as Art: An Approach to the *Ku-Chin Hsiao Shuo* [*Gujin xiaoshuo*]". He argues that "these stories are designed to subordinate all didactic elements to entertainment",[54] and that "the storyteller-format and all its trappings preclude the possibility that anything in the stories themselves might be primarily directed to the reader's edification"[55] due to the light hearted, conversational tone of the narrator. While the importance of the entertainment function of the works is undeniable, Wong's conclusion rests on two assumptions about the nature of didacticism; that it necessarily has to be delivered with "the seriousness of a preacher, or even of a teacher",[56] and that it has to persuade the reader "to a position [s]he does not initially hold",[57] neither of which is necessarily the case. Didacticism does not exclude entertainment; indeed, entertainment has the potential to make the didactic message more effective. Li Yu argues this principle in *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 (Carnal Prayer Mat): one can recognise its general validity even while doubting its

[54] Wong, "Entertainment as Art: An Approach to the *Ku-Chin Hsiao Shuo*", p.244.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., p.243.
[57] Ibid., p.249-250.

applicability to *Rou putuan* in particular.[58] Meanwhile, one of the reasons that a certain view becomes and remains popularly accepted is the presence of a body of literature that promotes and reinforces it. Foulkes observes that the real power of propaganda "lies in its capacity to conceal itself, to appear natural, to coalesce completely and indivisibly with the values and accepted power symbols of a given society".[59] Indeed, didacticism has even been described as "the view that there are universal moral values and that they can be conveyed through literature";[60] that is, that the reaffirmation of pre-existing values is a defining characteristic of didacticism.

Wong's hypothesis that the *Sanyan* and *huaben* more generally are primarily entertainment texts is an attempt to solve what he accurately recognises as the "enormous difficulty critics have experienced in attempting to determine the specific moral-philosophical content of these stories".[61] This difficulty is tackled in a different way by Yang Shuhui in his analysis of Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* collections *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*. He concludes that Feng manipulates the way the storyteller is perceived by the reader in order to imply particular moral judgements on the characters in the stories

[58] In the first chapter of *Rou putuan*, Li Yu argues that his work is more effective at promoting morals than a "morality book" 道學之書 due to the fact that it is better at piquing the reader's interest. While the reader may only use a morality book to stuff the mouth of a jar or for smoking, a book with erotic content stands a chance at actually being read. Li Yu, *Rou putuan* 肉舖團 j.1, p.3b-4a.
[59] Foulkes, *Literature and Propaganda*, p.3.
[60] Casement, "Literature and Didacticism: Examining Some Popularly Held Ideas", p.102.
[61] Wong, "Entertainment as Art: An Approach to the *Ku-Chin Hsiao Shuo*", p.242.

which differ from the stated judgement of the storyteller. The way that Feng arranges his plots and adapts his sources often undermines the statements of the simulated storyteller. In other situations, Feng may also "deploy the narrator as a personal spokesman when addressing values he holds dear",[62] ensuring that the narrator's statements are broadly in line with the judgements implied by the text and on occasion backing the narrator up with marginal commentary. Yang borrows theoretical perspectives on dialogism and ventriloquism from Bakhtin and Holquist to explore Feng's manipulation of the storyteller, companion stories, and female characters to channel his authorial voice, making each feature of the *huaben* speak for him.

The generic features of the *huaben* form, with the prominent presence of the simulated storyteller and the consequent distancing of the author from the text, render ventriloquism a highly suitable theoretical perspective with which to analyse it. The focus on different textual roles in this thesis, and the use of personas for two of these roles, also makes for a natural fit with the concept of ventriloquism. However, Yang Shuhui also argues that Feng's use of ventriloquism was not carried on by Ling Mengchu or Li Yu, as Ling and Li did not deny authorship of their stories and

[62] Ibid., p.45.

deployed a storyteller persona that was more personalised and literati-like than Feng's.[63]

However, it is argued here that rather than ventriloquism being absent in *Erpai*, the ventriloquism in *Erpai* is of a different, somewhat less subtle, character than that found in *Sanyan*. The specific differences between *Sanyan* and *Erpai* in this area will be described and analysed in more detail in Chapter Five. Meanwhile, the various theories that come under the umbrella of "ventriloquism" will be examined; certain of these are more applicable to Ling's work then Feng's, and vice versa.

Ventriloquism

Yang Shuhui's primary theoretical influence is the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin's theories have been applied to a range of Chinese literature: Martin W. Huang has employed the concept of the chronotype to analyse the "privatization" of the setting in Chinese vernacular novels,[64] while Stephen Roddy and Thomas Wilson have applied his notions of polyphony and heteroglossia to novels such as *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (The Scholars) and Confucian works respectively.[65] Daria Berg has also used his theory of "carnival" as the basis of her reading of *Xingshi*

[63] Ibid., p.155.
[64] Huang, Martin, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*.
[65] Roddy, *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations in Late Imperial China*; Wilson, *Genealogy of the Way: The Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China*.

yinyuan zhuan 醒世姻緣傳 (A Tale of Marriage Destiny to Awaken the World).[66] Yang, meanwhile, adopts Bakhtin's concept of literary ventriloquism.

For Bakhtin, ventriloquism is bound up with the relationships and distances between an author, their work, and the language they employ, and appears as part of his wider theory of dialogism:

> …a prose writer can distance himself from the language of his own work, while at the same time distancing himself, in varying degrees, from the different layers and aspects of the work. He can make use of language without wholly giving himself up to it, he may treat it as semi-alien or completely alien to himself, while compelling language ultimately to serve all his own intentions. The author does not speak in a given language (from which he distances himself to a greater or lesser degree), but he speaks, as it were, *through* language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates.[67]

In this model, the utilitarian nature of language is emphasised. The author takes the position of ventriloquist while the written language serves as the dummy, saying what the author wishes it to say rather than what it appears to "say" on the surface. It is

[66] Berg, *Carnival in China: A Reading of the Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan*.
[67] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel", p.299; emphasis in original.

Yang Shuhui's application of this insight to the works of Feng Menglong that leads him to discover the various ways in which ventriloquism works in the *Sanyan*. This type of ventriloquism manifests itself in something closely akin to irony, though Bakhtin's translator Holquist observes that dialogism holds that this "actually constitutes a paradigm for all utterance: I can appropriate meaning to my own purposes only by ventriloquating others."[68] This view of ventriloquism, key to the *Sanyan* stories as the way in which Feng undermines his storyteller and introduces shades of nuance into their interpretation, is less important in *Erpai*, where the storyteller is not undermined in the same way. Rather, as will be seen below, in *Erpai* the storyteller functions as a dummy to promote the beliefs of the implied author.

Bakhtin's theories of "hybrid construction" and "heteroglossia" are also related to ventriloquism. For Bakhtin, a "hybrid construction" is

> an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages", two semantic and axiological belief systems.[69]

[68] Holquist, "The Politics of Representation", p.169.
[69] Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel", p.304.

Bakhtin gives an example from Dickens' *Little Dorrit* to illustrate what he means by this:

> It was a dinner to provoke an appetite, though he had not had one. The rarest dishes, sumptuously cooked and sumptuously served; the choicest fruits; the most exquisite wines; marvels of workmanship in gold and silver, china and glass; innumerable things delicious to the senses of taste, smell, and sight, were insinuated into its composition. *O, what a wonderful man this Merdle, what a great man, what a master man, how blessedly and enviably endowed*--in one word, what a rich man![70]

Bakhtin observes that the admiration expressed in the italicised portion is "in the form of the concealed speech of another".[71] Without any formal markers such as quote marks to indicate the changes of speaker, Dickens employs the hyperbolic words of Merdle's admirers before switching again to a different voice to expose their rank hypocrisy. In terms of ventriloquism, Dickens is ventriloquist while the admirers are his dummies, appropriating their words to suit his own purposes; the special feature of hybrid construction is that this appropriation is not indicated formally in the text. Bakhtin also uses the term "heteroglossia" to describe the profusion of voices in a piece of fiction. This has a relatively straightforward parallel with ventriloquism:

[70] Cited in Ibid., p.304; emphasis added by Bakhtin.
[71] Ibid.

> Heteroglossia…is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author.[72]

Bakhtin's "heteroglossia", then, is analogous to the speech of a ventriloquist's dummy, which expresses indirectly the author's meaning.

Other critics have explored the possibilities of the ventriloqual metaphor further. David Carroll, arguing that the dialogism of Holquist is "weak… more an appropriation of the other than an opening to or an affirmation of alterity",[73] supports "a much more radical view of ventriloquism … the ventriloquist himself must be seen as ventriloquated as much as ventriloquating".[74] To illustrate this effect, Carroll gives the example of Bakhtin's Christianity being influenced by the Marxist framework he had to adopt (or ventriloquise through) in order to write about it in the Soviet Union;

[72] Ibid., p.324; emphasis in original.
[73] Carroll, "The Alterity of Discourse: Form, History, and the Question of the Political in M. M. Bakhtin", p.74.
[74] Ibid.

it is also visible in the Socratic dialogues, in which "Socrates positions himself as *responding* to the laws he himself staged".[75]

This idea was developed and applied to everyday conversation by communication studies scholar François Cooren, who concludes that "any act of communication consists of implicitly or explicitly making beings speak or say things, beings that, inversely, also make us speak or say things".[76] Central to these perspectives is the refusal to privilege a single agent (the ventriloquist) and the extension of agency to "beings", which may be either human or inanimate, such as Bakhtin's Marxist framework or Socrates' laws. This idea of bidirectional ventriloquism, especially as embodied in the Socratic dialogues, shows clear parallels with Ling Mengchu's fiction on various levels: Ling's textual roles of storyteller and commentator both voice responses to situations that he has staged in his role as writer, placing Ling's various textual roles on different sides of the ventriloqual equation.

Cooren also identified two forms of ventriloquism, which he calls "downstream" and "upstream". "Downstream ventriloquism" covers all the types of ventriloquism mentioned so far; analysis of it involves identifying "what a specific turn of talk, text,

[75] Cooren, *Action and Agency in Dialogue: Passion, Incarnation, and Ventriloquism*, p.87; emphasis in original.
[76] Ibid., p.134-135.

intonation, or gesture makes its producer say, or inversely, what a given interlocutor makes a specific turn of talk, text, or intonation/gesture say".[77] In contrast to this, analysis of "upstream ventriloquism" is focused on "reconstructing the various beings that get implicitly or explicitly staged in interactions".[78] Cooren demonstrates this by reference to a recorded conversation between a hospital director in the Congo and Marius, a doctor visiting from Médecins Sans Frontières, an extract from which is cited below. They are discussing staff meetings. Marius believes that the scheduling should be changed as they leave nobody in the hospital to tend to patients. The director, meanwhile, stands by the view that the meetings should stay as they are.

> Marius: Because meanwhile it's the same, it's a meeting that lasts thirty to forty-five minutes, as you were saying last time and we have no one in the services anymore…
>
> Director: Yes well, there are always uh mechanisms uh there are people who call us and we dispatch a nurse if there is a problem because these are important briefings.[79]

Here, Marius's use of the phrase "as you were saying" in his statement about the length of the meetings harnesses the director's own words in support of his case. The

[77] Ibid., p.135.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., p.105.

director, in reply, invokes the authority of the hospital's "mechanisms", imbued with the power of tradition through his repetition of the word "always", in order to counter Marius's case. This invocation of various external authorities in order to back up one's own point of view is Cooren's "upstream ventriloquism". In employing it, it is as if one deliberately renders oneself a dummy through which another's words are spoken; however, by speaking them, they are adapted to one's intent. The difference between upstream and downstream ventriloquism is perhaps most clearly indicated graphically, with the position of the subject underlined in bold:

Downstream:

Source of utterance (ventriloquist) → Dummy → Audience

Upstream:

Source of utterance (external authority) → **Dummy** → Audience

This "upstream ventriloquism" is visible in *huaben*: the storyteller in *Erpai* periodically invokes the figure of the Emperor or the appeal of common sense to bolster his arguments, as analysed below. In an analogous way, Yang Shuhui shows how the use of anonymous folk songs by Feng Menglong and other literati, and by extension the use of vernacular fiction, was part of a quest to gain the "legitimating

aura of general sentiment",[80] though he uses the framework of appropriation rather than ventriloquism to interpret it. This form of ventriloquism is key to this chapter, as it directly concerns the use of ventriloquism as a persuasive rhetorical strategy.

Another way of gaining critical insights from ventriloquism lies in a return to the stage art itself, using the ventriloquist-dummy relationship as a metaphor directly comparable to the relationship between Ling and his textual roles. David Goldblatt analyses the workings of this relationship and its applicability to art and literature in his book *Art and Ventriloquism*; it is striking how many of the features of the stage show are transferable to the *huaben* form and Ling Mengchu's fiction in particular. In his study, Goldblatt takes the pairing of the ventriloquist Edgar Bergen and his dummy Charlie McCarthy, who had a popular weekly radio show in the US during the 1950s, as being emblematic of the act.

Goldblatt recognises one of the major characteristics of the ventriloquist's act as "illusion without deceit"[81]:

[80] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.41.
[81] Goldblatt, *Art and Ventriloquism*, p.132.

> Audiences knew Bergen was talking with himself and if they chose to do so could have understood the act entirely, or only, that way. But that would have spoiled all the fun. A ventriloquist who actually deceives an audience would undermine his own act.[82]

The logic behind this is obvious: the audience is simultaneously entertained by the illusion and in awe of the skill that it takes to produces it as they enter into a "double-leveled world-view".[83] This insight is particularly useful in this research as, unlike the theories discussed above, it is concerned with the audience; both how they perceive a ventriloqual exchange and the effect that viewing ventriloquism has on them. Given that, as established in Chapter Two, Ling's target audience was most likely composed of educated people in the mid to high echelons of society, his fiction and the ventriloquist-dummy relationship that he enacted with his "storyteller" role would also have offered them an "illusion without deceit". This is especially true in Ling's case, as unlike Feng Menglong he explicitly asserted his agency in the preface: his audience would have been fully cognizant of the fact that Ling was, in effect, speaking to them twice, but allowed themselves to be acquiescent in the illusion.

The "double-levelled world-view" of the audience enables the ventriloquist to create a dislocated, quasi-independent persona, through which the ventriloquist may speak

[82] Ibid., p.41.
[83] Hagberg, "Critical Commentary", in Goldblatt, *Art and Ventriloquism*, p.6.

from a position outside themselves, "recycling" their own voice.[84] This too is evident in the act: the dummy McCarthy allowed Bergen the freedom to speak through him "on the periphery of good taste",[85] in voices that he would otherwise have been unable to use. This freedom is however contingent on audience perception:

> The ventriloquist welcomes the perception that his dummy is an independent entity, succeeding to the extent that this audience becomes indifferent to the actual speech source, treating the ventriloqualized persona as the star of the act, the personality of interest of the two performers, the one with all the funny lines, different voice, surprising animation and oddly exaggerated appearance. The ventriloquist is the author of what the dummy says to the extent that he appears not to be the author of what the dummy says, all the while retaining a repressed presence that links him to the dummy.[86]

This insight is applicable to *Erpai*. The highly developed and distinct storyteller persona means that Ling's presence remains "repressed" relative to the storyteller, with the freedoms this implies. The dislocated persona of the storyteller may have given Ling greater licence in the erotic episodes in his stories, which, though he

[84] Goldblatt, *Art and Ventriloquism*, p.132.
[85] Ibid., p.41.
[86] Ibid., p.71.

avoids becoming a "criminal to decent taste", lie "on the periphery of good taste", just like McCarthy's utterances.

A further parallel lies in the nature of this dislocation of the speaker in ventriloquism. This "takes the form of vacillating vocal identities in such a way as to efface the speaker as speaker while promoting him/her as listener".[87] While this is obvious in stage ventriloquism, with the ventriloquist pretending to listen to what they make the dummy say, it may seem inapplicable to the case of the *huaben*, where the writer is apparently not engaged in a "conversation" with the storyteller. However, in both *Erpai* and *Sanyan*, the presence of a marginal commentator persona means that there is indeed a "conversation" of sorts ongoing, in which the commentator listens to and responds to the storyteller. Of the two, the commentator persona is more closely identified with the author, through Ling being explicitly named as the commentator on the title page.

The different approaches to the theorization of ventriloquism described above show the flexibility of the framework. The advantage of using ventriloquism over a standard narratological scheme in this thesis is that ventriloquism allows analysis of the relationship between the author and their personas as storyteller and commentator

[87] Ibid., p.91.

(following the insights of Bakhtin, Carroll, and Goldblatt) to be combined with analysis of the communicative techniques used by the storyteller (following the insights of Cooren) under one theoretical framework, highlighting resonances between the two areas.

Several types of ventriloquism exist in *Erpai*. Most obviously, there is the downstream ventriloqual relationship between Ling and his storyteller. Similarly, there is also a downstream ventriloqual relationship between Ling and his commentator, though there is less distance in this relationship. Concurrently, there is also a more complex multi-directional ventriloquism occurring between Ling, his storyteller, and the commentator: Ling ventriloquises both personas, and stages the interactions between them. More downstream ventriloquism is seen when Ling in effect ventriloquises the audience, in the passages that begin with a variation on the phrase "Storyteller, you've got it wrong!" 說話的，你說錯了. Upstream ventriloquism is evident both in diegesis, when the storyteller invokes "the principle of Heaven" 天理, and in the works as a whole, through Ling's borrowing of popular authority through the use of the vernacular and a non-elite storyteller figure. Hybrid constructions and heteroglossia are also found throughout the stories, as the utterances of the characters are made to undermine them and reflect the intentions of the implied author. The specific ways in which Ling uses these ventriloquistic models

in conjunction with his textual roles to achieve the effects of political discursion and moral didacticism are analysed below.

Political discursion

Political discursion I: discursive tangents

Firstly, the use of ventriloquism to achieve the goal of political discursion will be examined. The voices of two of Ling's textual roles, storyteller and commentator, are combined in order to support the arguments put forward in the text; in contrast, the role of the writer (i.e., the altering of sources to make a political point) is not used for the purposes of political discursion. The political arguments in *Erpai* are most obvious in the discursive interludes that are scattered throughout the collections. A good example is found in story II-1, the primary message of which is to teach respect for the written word. A precious copy of the *Jingang jing* 金剛經 (Diamond Sutra) made by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) is held by monks on an island in Dongting Lake 洞庭湖. However, one year there is a famine, and the monks have to pawn it for rice. The lady of the family that they pawn it to is a devout Buddhist, and returns it to them free of charge. Unfortunately, while the book is being returned to the island a page blows off into the lake; the monk transporting it covers up the incident. Later, a corrupt and cruel official named Liu 柳 is stationed nearby. He tries to extort the sutra from the temple, but when he sees that it is incomplete abandons the idea, not

recognizing its true value. Subsequently, the abbot of the temple gets lost and happens across a fisherman reciting sutra, with the missing page hung in pride of place on the wall: the spirit of Bai Juyi himself had appeared and taught the fisherman to read because of the respect he had shown to the written word. The sutra is thus made complete again.

In the midst of this, the storyteller breaks off on a tangent, expounding his ideas for a free market solution to famine:

> And so in the 43rd year of the Jiajing reign (1535), there was major flooding throughout the region of Wu. The fields and crops were completely flooded, not a scrap of vegetation grew, and the price of rice leapt up. All areas forbade the [regional] import and export of rice, the government strictly implemented price controls, and so less and less rice came in. Actually, when the harvest fails and the price of rice is high, the government should quietly let public sentiment take its course and not stir things up. There will always be a group of merchants with capital and an eye for profit who, greedy for that high price, will sell rice brought in from other areas where it is cheap; wealthy people of property who have private stores of rice, also greedy for that high price, will sell rice from their own stores. {This is a wonderful policy for relieving famine and collecting rice: good officials should take note} As rice gradually starts to gather, the price will naturally gradually fall. This principle is extremely easy to

understand. [But] those obstinate, rotten Confucians who are incapable of grasping the current situation become officials and as soon as they encounter a famine, all they do is implement prohibitions on the import and export of rice to and from the area, price controls, and so on, believing that they are preventing other areas from buying up rice [from their region]. But they don't know that as soon as a prohibition is put in place ruffians will start playing tricks. On seeing local trading, they will call out loudly that the prohibition is being breached, [and the offender] will be taken to court and immediately placed in shackles and reprimanded. Those people of property, afraid of getting into trouble, close their storehouse doors and remain aloof even though their family has rice. Moreover, as there is an official fixed price that one cannot sell over, there is no great profit to be had, and so why would one go to the trouble of selling? Those travelling rice salesmen see that the official price is low and have no desire [to bring rice in]; even if the ordinary people are willing to pay more to buy rice in secret, they fear being exposed, reprimanded, and punished. People with capital are unwilling to take on this risk to do this kind of trivial trade. Therefore, there is even less rice on the market, and the price rises. {By only seeing the ignorance of the commoners, the officials in charge get in the way}. The commoners are ignorant and the officials are clueless. All they can do is grumble, "Even with all these restrictions, there is no more rice! Even with all these price controls, rice doesn't get any cheaper!". They cannot explain it, and just cough up the

[old] phrase “There are no good policies for relieving a famine”.[88] Who knew that the more one implements famine relief policies, the worse the famine gets?

且說嘉靖四十三年，吳中大水，田禾淹盡，寸草不生，米價踴貴。各處禁糴、閉糴，官府嚴示平價，越發米不入境了。元來大凡年荒米貴，官府只合靜聽民情，不去生事。少不得有一夥有本錢趨利的商人，貪那貴價，從外方賤處販將米來，有一夥有家當囤米的財主，貪那貴價，從家裡廒中發出米去。【救荒聚米妙策，良有司宜知】米既漸漸輻輳，價自漸漸平減。這個道理，也是極容易明白的。最是那不識時務執拗的腐儒，做了官府，專一遇荒就行禁糴、閉糴、平價等事，他認為是不使外方糴了本地米去。不知一行禁止，就有棍徒詐害。遇見本地交易，便聲揚犯禁，拿到公庭，立受枷責。那有身家的，怕惹事端，家中有米，只索閉倉高坐；又且官有定價，不許貴賣，無大利息，何苦出糴？那些販米的客人，見官價不高，也無想頭；就是小民私下願增價暗糴，懼怕敗露，受責受罰，有本錢的人不肯擔這樣干擊，幹這樣沒要緊的事。所以越弄得市上無米，米價轉高。【專見愚民無知，上官因而誤事】愚民不知上官不諳，只埋怨道：「如此禁閉，米只不多！如此抑價，米只不賤！」沒得解說，只囫圇說一句「救荒無奇策」罷了。誰知多是要行荒政，反致越荒的。[89]

[88] Li Zhi also took aim at this attitude, saying “If one says ‘There are no great policies for relieving a famine’, it is just a load of nonsense talked by vulgar Confucian scholars: how can you listen to it!” 若曰「救荒無奇策」，此則俗儒之妄談，何可聽哉！ His preferred methods of famine relief were, however, very different to Ling’s, advocating instead an active role for the government in providing capital to buy in food from other areas and fixing a low price. See Li Zhi, “Fu Deng Dingshi” 復鄧鼎石, *Fen shu* j.2, *Li Zhi wenji* v.1, p.101-102.

[89] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.5.

The most obvious ventriloqual relationship here is of course between Ling Mengchu and the storyteller, who morphs into a mouthpiece for the political views of the implied author. While the storyteller spends most of his time relating the words and actions of the characters, confining his judgements largely to the beginnings and ends of the stories, here he is pushed to centre stage, using the techniques and language of narration in order to advance a political argument. The argument unfolds with a clear narrative logic as each group's reaction to the policy and the consequence this has is presented, from the "ruffians" to the rich people and the merchants. Carefully selected and generalised psychological insights, such as the people of property being "afraid of causing trouble" and the merchants worried about getting caught selling rice above the set price, are used to explain and rationalise each group's decisions, lending the consequences a greater sense of inevitability. Meanwhile, the language register does not differ from that used in the stories themselves, minimizing the disruption felt by the audience when the text shifts from narrative to discursion; its colloquial and lively nature also combines with the narrative techniques mentioned above to maintain audience interest while ensuring that the argument is clear and easy to follow. An additional benefit of this type of language is that it enables the text to harness what Yang terms the "legitimating aura of popular sentiment"[90] in support of its argument.

[90] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.41.

This is perhaps most prominent when the storyteller tells us “this principle is extremely easy to understand” 這個道理，也是極容易明白的, thus invoking the common sense of the ordinary people in service of his argument in an example of upstream ventriloquism.

The storyteller is not the only ventriloquist’s dummy present in the text. The repressed presence of the author is also visible in the commentator persona, who adds his approval to the argument in key places in a staged interaction with the storyteller. This adds weight to the argument through the involvement of a literati persona as a counterpart to the non-elite, folksy style of the storyteller. At the same time, as the commentator’s contribution is presented as extrinsic to the argument, it is lent the guise of objectivity. This is cultivated elsewhere in the works: for example, in II-22, there is a poem that the profligate son in the story is meant to have written. While the storyteller gives no comment, the commentator says “This is the poem from the original tale. It sounds more like the words of an enlightened person than a foolish profligate” 此原傳中詩也，多是達人口氣，不似痴敗人語.[91] The commentator is sufficiently detached to make aesthetic criticisms about the composition and history of the text, heightening the illusion of objectivity. Another example of this can be

[91] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.397.

found in II-6, where, as already mentioned in Chapter Two, he criticises a letter written by a ghost to her parents, saying,

> This is writing from the original tale. The netherworld and the world of the living connect, and [she] tells of her emotions. Why use empty words that are tiresome?! These are the tricks of old pedants, but I had no reason to change it, and so left it as it is for now.
>
> 此原傳筆也。幽明相通，一訴情事，何至虛文可厭乃爾！老學究伎倆，然改之無端，姑仍其舊。[92]

In a similar way to the first example, the apparent objectivity of the commentator's persona is underlined. This is an important technique in establishing the credibility and authority of the commentator, enabling this textual role to be deployed more effectively in support of political arguments.

Finally, the storyteller also ventriloquises the "rotten Confucian" officials he is attacking, putting words in their mouths in order to support the main argument in an example of heteroglossia. Given the impression of inevitability of cause and effect carefully built up through the use of narrative techniques and the claiming of common

[92] Ibid., p.116.

sense for his argument, the comical bewilderment of the officials when faced with the ineffectuality of their policies completely undermines them. As described by Bakhtin's concept of ventriloquism, the words of the Confucians are instrumentalised and, having been totally undermined by the framing context, used for the storyteller's own rhetorical purposes.

Political discursion II: control of interpretation

A slightly different set of ventriloquistic techniques is employed in the introductory story to II-31. This attacks the practice of carrying out autopsies on the dead. Although admitting that the requirement for an autopsy was originally a good law, the storyteller goes on to show how it can be abused by the unscrupulous to falsely accuse people, listing the bewildering range of fees demanded by the officials at each stage of the process, which mean that "even if the autopsy result is snow white showing no injury, this person [the accused] has lost seven or eight tenths of his property" 就簡得雪白無傷，這人家已去了七八了.[93] The ire of the implied author is then, through the storyteller dummy, turned on those officials who order autopsies despite the wishes of the family to the contrary:

[93] Ibid., p.513. Ling uses the character 簡 in place of 檢 due to the naming taboo of the reigning Chongzhen Emperor Zhu Youjian 朱由檢.

…That is why the law has provisions that read “Listen to the one who is not willing” and “Allow the family of the deceased to submit a request that the autopsy does not take place”. This is an area in which the great Emperor has accommodated public sentiment. Who would know that the cruel officials of the world who want to show their power, or who harbour a private grudge against the accused, are not willing to listen to the relative’s request for the autopsy to be dropped, and are set on stubbornly performing one. This causes long-shut coffins to be opened; long-buried bones to be dug up. {Those implementing the law should give this some reflection}… He tells himself that he is righting the wrongs suffered by the deceased, but does not know that the deceased’s suffering is already extreme. This is something for which one is punished by having no sons or grandsons.

……律上所以有「不願者聽」及「許屍親告遞免簡」之例，正是聖主曲體人情處。豈知世上慘刻的官，要見自己風力，或是私心嗔恨被告，不肯聽屍親免簡，定要劣撅做去，以致開久殮之棺，掘久埋之骨。【司法者宜加少省】……自道是與死者伸冤，不知死者慘酷已極了。這多是絕子絕孫的勾當。[94]

Here again, the storyteller and commentator dummies are employed in tandem here, carrying out a simulated conversation. First the storyteller employs upstream

[94] Ibid., p.513-514.

ventriloquism to invoke the laws of the land, delegitimizing those who oppose him.[95] Then, the storyteller simultaneously invokes the Emperor and popular sentiment in service of the argument, again using upstream ventriloquism to buttress his position with authority derived from the highest and lowest ends of the social scale. The storyteller then moves to voice the officials' motivations, stressing that selfish motives of pride or revenge are behind the decision to conduct the autopsy, while the supposedly impartial commentator highlights and supports the storyteller's assessment by directly addressing legal officials. Finally, the otherworldly force of karmic retribution is invoked as a punishment to deter officials still further. Meanwhile, it implicitly claims the support of yet another powerful outside agency for the argument: officials who stubbornly order autopsies are placed in opposition to the law, the Emperor, popular sentiment, and the force of inevitable karmic

[95] This ventriloquism of the law does not appear to be completely accurate. The *Da Ming ling* 大明令 (Commandment of the Great Ming) states that exemptions may be granted from autopsies only in certain situations: "All those who die through hanging themselves or drowning, with no other cause, and whose relatives are happy to bury them, may be exempted from autopsy once the official has confirmed the situation. If the victim has been killed by robbers, and the plaintiff asks for exemption from autopsy, the official may examine the body and hand it over to the family for burial. The relatives of prisoners who contract an illness in jail, and die after being released on bail for medical treatment with no suspicious circumstances involved are also permitted to request exemption from autopsy. Apart from these, requests for exemption from autopsy shall not be considered in any case where the deceased has an external mortal wound." 凡諸人自縊、溺水身死，別無他故，親屬情願安葬，官司詳審明白，准告免檢。若事主被强盜殺死、苦主告免檢者，官爲相視傷損，將屍給親埋葬。其獄囚患病責保看治而死者、情無可疑，亦許親屬告免檢。復外據殺傷而死者，親屬雖告不聽免檢. *Da Ming ling* 大明令, cited in Ying Jia 應檟, *Da Ming lü shiyi* 大明律釋義 j.28, pp.17b-18a, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.863, p.218.

retribution. The use of (primarily) upstream ventriloquism in this passage allows the implied author to effectively voice his opposition to this practice.

This discursive introduction is then followed by the prelude story. In this, for which no source can be found, a rich Fujian man Hong Dashou 洪大壽 beats a hired labourer Chen Fusheng 陳福生, who later dies as a result. Chen counsels his wife not to take the case to court, but to quietly accept compensation payments from Hong. However, a member of the extended family Chen the Third 陳三, also known as Chen the Ruffian 陳喇虎, tries to persuade the wife to change her mind and bring a case. He hopes to use the case to extort money from Hong. She refuses, but Chen the Ruffian then brings a case against both her and Hong for negotiating privately to settle a murder case. The local official "is of the most cruel character. What he enjoys is examining corpses; what he likes is criminalizing people. He is a past master at breaking up people's property." 最是心性慘刻的，喜的是簡屍，好的是入罪，是個拆人家的祖師[96] and, seeing Hong's wealth, orders an autopsy despite having to torture the wife into agreement. The undertaker, keen to impress his superior, exaggerates the findings, "describing red as purple, and blue-green as black" 把紅的說紫，青的說黑, but on actually checking the law, the official finds that there is no provision for execution when an employer beats an employee to death. One evening

[96] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.515.

after going out drinking, Chen the Ruffian is waylaid by the ghost of Chen Fusheng, who wrestles him down and covers him with mud. Chen the Ruffian later comes out in a rash and dies. Fearful of infection, his family bury him in a shallow grave. Dogs subsequently unearth and half-eat his still-warm corpse.

Evidently, this prelude story closely mirrors the discursive introduction, from the stubborn official to the trouble-making ruffian, and can be read as an exposition of it in narrative form. The power of the storyteller and commentator is used to manage the interpretation of events in such a way that the argument is bolstered while the presence of the implied author remains repressed. For example, neither dummy criticises Hong Dashou for causing the death of Chen Fusheng. The killing is mentioned only briefly, and the storyteller makes a point of mentioning that the beating was triggered by Chen's impertinent remarks. Moreover, the wife is made to invoke fate, consequently diminishing Hong's responsibility. She says "Fusheng's death, though he was indeed mistreated by the rich man, was also down to his allotted span being up" 福生的死，固然受了財主些氣，也是年該命限.[97] This acceptance of the machinations of fate and her allotted position in life (she also accepts that the poor should not try to fight the rich) places her in a favourable light when compared to Chen the Ruffian, who is characterised by the storyteller as being "ill-content with

[97] Ibid., p.514.

his place" 不本分. Throughout *Erpai*, the storyteller and commentator commonly criticise characters who are ill-content with their place, though the motive in this specific case is not to tacitly approve of people beating their employees; rather, it is to enable the story to be framed in a way that better fits the political argument against autopsies in the limited space afforded by the *huaben* form.

The criticism voiced by the storyteller and commentator is directed instead at Chen the Ruffian and the cruel official who ordered the autopsy. Chen the Ruffian is given a gruesome ending, the mauling of his corpse serving as appropriate karmic retribution for his part in trying to subject Chen Fusheng's body to an autopsy, with the commentator nodding approvingly "{The end of an evil person}" 【惡人下場】.[98] The storyteller concludes that the fact that Chen Fusheng wreaked his revenge on Chen the Ruffian and not his murderer Hong Dashou supports the thesis that an autopsy is not what the deceased would have wanted. This conclusion is only made tenable by the prior minimization of Hong's guilt for the death.

The official is criticised repeatedly by both storyteller and commentator working in tandem. In this story this is primarily accomplished by the storyteller revealing the official's psychology, while the commentator assesses it:

[98] Ibid., p.516.

He saw a murder accusation, found out that the Hong family were vastly rich, and wanted to use this matter to show off his power. {This is an illness that cannot be cured}

見人命狀，訪得洪家巨富，就想在這樁事上顯出自己風力來。【此病不可醫】[99]

and

The judge was delighted, and thought "I can nab a rich person, and if I am not willing to go easy on him, then my reputation will be greatly enhanced" {There is an obstinate disease in his breast, and people will inevitably get seriously harmed}

推官大喜，道是拿得到一個富人，不肯假借，我聲名就重了。【胸有癖疾，必害人不小】[100]

In this way, the storyteller ventriloquises the official's thought processes, revealing the supposed selfish motivations for carrying out the autopsy. In another instance of the storyteller and commentator simulating a conversation, the commentator then

[99] Ibid., p.514.
[100] Ibid., p.515.

criticises the officials, thus supporting the argument advanced in the introduction. Finally, the story ends with the storyteller making a direct appeal:

> People who work as officials must know this: unless one truly has no option, why would one do such an extremely cruel thing? If the deceased's family plea for no autopsy to be carried out, the right thing to do is assent to them. {This is something those in charge should know}. As for false homicide cases, there is even less need to mention them. One must wait until an investigation has found out that the homicide is genuine before carrying out an autopsy and determining the crime.
>
> 做官的人要曉得，若非萬不得已，何苦做那極慘的勾當？倘若屍親苦求免簡，也應該依他為是。【有司所宜知之】。至於假人命，一發不必說。必待審得人命逼真，然後行簡定罪。[101]

As seen previously, the commentator again steps in to back up what the storyteller is saying in a simulated interaction from an ostensibly impartial position. This final portion represents the natural conclusion of the argument: having seen the terrible consequences of autopsies presented in discursive and narrative formats, the official reading the work is called upon to change his ways. This prelude story shows how

[101] Ibid., p.516.

certain stories in *Erpai* are hung around a core political argument, with other aspects, such as morality, manipulated to serve this agenda.

This guiding of the story's purpose can also be seen to a certain extent in the main story of II-31, a tale found in many versions of a man who takes revenge for his father before killing himself. In this iteration, Ling uses ventriloquism through the storyteller and commentator to spin the story so that it is an opposition to autopsies, rather than the more conventional themes of filial piety or revenge, which is pushed to the centre stage. A similar tactic is visible in the mains story of II-21. This largely resembles a traditional whodunnit, but again Ling uses his textual roles to ensure that the main theme is the necessity of officials not to wrongly imprison people rather than the inadvisability of crime; the probable source, on the other hand, is presented as an illustration of "divine dreams" 神夢 related to court cases.[102] In both cases, it is significant that the political discursion is accomplished not through the use of the "writer" role to alter the plots of the source texts, but through the storyteller and commentator acting together to control the interpretation of the plot.

Political discursion III: passing points

[102] The probable source is Yu Maoxue 余懋學, "De meng jue yiyu" 得夢决疑獄, *Renyu leibian* 仁獄類編 j.16, pp.16a-20b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.973, pp.780-782.

The stories are also used to make minor political points in a less obtrusive manner. Story II-5 tells of a boy who was abducted on the evening of the Lantern Festival and subsequently meets the Emperor. It is introduced in this way:

> It was the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the first lunar month that year. At the time, Wang Anshi had yet to be appointed and the New Laws were not yet in force. There were no incursions on the four borders, and the myriad people were content in their employment. It was a time of peace. {It's plain to see that after Wang Anshi was appointed it wasn't peaceful any more}.
>
> 那年正月十五元宵佳節，其時王安石未用，新法未行，四境無侵，萬民樂業，正是太平時候。【著眼可見王安石用後便不太平了】[103]

In another example of Ling's two ventriloquist's dummies working in tandem, the storyteller inserts the comment about Wang Anshi into what is otherwise a standard description of the story's setting, lending it an additional political significance. Just in case the readers failed to grasp the heavy implication, the commentator then steps in to spell it out for them. The comment is made in passing, and is not picked up or

[103] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.87.

developed anywhere subsequently in the story, which focuses on the miraculous return of people who have been abducted.

A similar technique is also used regularly to criticise official corruption, even when it is not the main theme of the story. This is shown in the introductory story to I-5, which showcases the accuracy of fortune tellers and argues for the power of fate. A young official, Liu, is advised by a fortune teller to be as corrupt as he likes on his first two appointments, but to be honest in his third. However, he cannot resist the desire for money and is dismissed. The fortune teller explains:

> Now I should explain to you. In a previous life you were a major merchant, with wealth amounting to 20 million. You died in Bianzhou, and this wealth was scattered amongst the people. When you served as official there, you were just collecting your own former possessions, so it was not regarded as taking things greedily and absolutely nothing befell you. {So now we know that the officials of today mostly have wealth scattered amongst the people from a previous life.}

今當與公說明。公前世是個大商，有二千萬貲財，死在汴州，其散在人處，公去做官，原是收了自家舊物，不為妄取，所以一些無事。【乃知今時之官多是前世有得散在人處的。】[104]

The commentator's interjection as part of a simulated conversation between the two dummies boldly voices an explicit political point against the culture of tolerating widespread corruption in Ling's own time, while allowing the story to proceed with its primary aim of demonstrating the accuracy of the fortune teller and the strength of fate. It also has the additional bonus effect of being witty, and thus increasing the entertainment value of the story. As in the previous example, ventriloquism through the commentator enables Ling to foreground a possible connotation of the text while not affecting the overall message of the story.

Moral didacticism

Moral didacticism I: encouragement and warning

Ventriloquistic techniques are also used in order to moralise. As Hanan has noted, Ling's morality is generally "centripetal",[105] focusing more on conformity to the type

[104] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.73; in the *LMCQJ* edition the character 之 in the marginal commentary is marked as illegible; it can be made out in Ling Mengchu, *Pai'an jingqi*, in *Guben xiaoshuo congkan* series 13 v.1, p.299.
[105] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story,* p.153.

of behaviour expected of one's social role rather than moral absolutes. This moral outlook tallies well with the idea of predestination that features so heavily in the stories, and it is promoted heavily through the ventriloquist's dummies: moral acts are acts in which one follows one's social role and accepts the primacy of fate. Just as with his political discursion, each story tends to focus on a particular aspect of morality, meaning that what is harshly criticised in one story may be tacitly or overtly permitted in another. A further point to note about the morality of the stories is that, in a similar way to the story on autopsy examined above, ventriloquism through the textual roles of commentator and storyteller is used to guide the reader to the interpretation of the story that fits the implied author's moral or political message.

A good example of this is story I-20, a classic tale of moral encouragement. The main story tells of Liu Yuanpu 劉元普, who is childless in his late sixties. He consults a fortune teller, who tells him that he is fated to be childless and has not long to live due to the ways in which he has accumulated his wealth. Liu then investigates the people who manage his affairs and makes improvements. Later, he takes in the wife and son of Li Kerang 李克讓, who died at his post and who sent them to Liu along with a blank letter of introduction: Li and Liu never met in person, and Li did this entirely on the strength of Liu's good reputation. Liu treats the two well. Later, Liu's wife urges him to take a concubine in order to have a child. Liu resists, but his wife

finds one anyway. When Liu finds out that the concubine Lansun 蘭孫 is the child of an official, he adopts her as a daughter instead, and arranges a marriage between her and Li Kerang's son Chunlang 春郎. It is revealed in a dream that Liu will be rewarded for this with two sons and thirty more years of life. Predictably, his wife soon falls pregnant with his first son Tianyou 天祐. As Liu is approaching seventy and his wife is by this point in her forties, the maid Zhaoyun 朝雲 publicly doubts that the child was born naturally. In order to prove his vigour to her, Liu has sex with her, and she bears his second son. Chunlang wins top spot in the Imperial examinations, as subsequently does Tianyou, and Liu is repeatedly honoured by the Emperor.

While the general message of moral encouragement is evident from the events of the plot, Ling deploys ventriloquistic techniques in order to emphasise the goodness of Liu and his family and strengthen the theme of the story. For example, in the introductory story the storyteller fulminates against the destabilizing influence on the family unit when, after the death of their wife, older men remarry younger women who they cannot satisfy sexually.[106] However, Liu married his current wife after the death of his first wife, and Ling intervenes to ensure both that the portrayal of Liu's family as a perfectly stable and well-functioning unit is not marred by this criticism,

[106] Ibid., p.303.

and that his previous tirade is not implicitly disproved by Liu's perfectly harmonious family. He uses his commentator dummy to interject, noting that "this is also a remarriage, but the difference is that one [woman] is good and one is not" 此亦繼娶也，而賢不賢別矣.[107]

Ling's desire to create paragons of Liu and his family is also shown in the way he accounts for Liu's initial poor fortune, using his role as writer to tweak the plot. While the sources give no specific reason for his bad luck,[108] in Ling's version of the story it is attributed to the sometimes dishonest ways in which his wealth was amassed, dishonesty that is then ascribed to his underlings and nephew. This addition of a reason for his childlessness helps to maintain order in the retributive moral universe of the stories, while also keeping Liu free from any personal wrongdoing and justifying his later rewards. On a broader level, it helps to keep the wider moral of the story clear.

Perhaps the most prominent example of Ling interceding in the interpretation of the story is found in the passage in which Liu sleeps with the maid Zhaoyun, getting her pregnant. Liu's stated intention is to prove to her that he is still virile despite his age. Perhaps aware that readers may not fully accept this explanation, Ling uses

[107] Ibid., p.306.
[108] Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.674-678.

ventriloquistic techniques to support Liu's claim, with the commentator directly stating that he "Lord Liu's thought of dispelling doubts is highly farsighted: he is not being lecherous" 劉公釋疑之慮甚長，非好色也,[109] while the storyteller subsequently restates that "at the time Liu Yuanpu wanted her not to suspect him and to show off his abilities" 劉元普也是一時要他不疑，賣弄本事.[110] The aim is to preserve Liu's depiction as a man of great virtue and maintain the system of reward and retribution; at worst he is guilty of the sin of pride in his sexual ability. Ling also takes pains to emphasise Liu's continued sexual vigour through the storyteller, further distinguishing him from the lustful old men who marry younger wives that they cannot satisfy, criticised in the introductory story. While the parallel prose passage describing their intercourse is made up of a string of playful images that highlight and exaggerate their age gap, Liu is not subjected to the same mockery that other older male characters who sleep with younger women suffer elsewhere in the stories.[111] Ling's intercessions show that though he did realise the morally problematic nature of

[109] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.322
[110] Ibid..
[111] For example, in story I-26, a Mrs Du 杜氏 agrees to spend the night at a temple as she finds the young monk attractive, but finds herself forced to have sex with his older master. Here, the parallel prose passage contrasts his eagerness with her resigned and reluctant acceptance, and emphasises his lack of stamina. See Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.404. Furthermore, in II-10, the elderly master of the house Old Mo 莫翁 takes up with a young serving girl: the social positions of the characters, and the inability of the girl to refuse, are identical to Liu's situation. However, Mo is mocked for being unable to sustain an erection and his motivation is pinpointed as being down to lecherous desire. See Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.178.

this episode, he chose to use his power of interpretation over the story to keep Liu's image untarnished.

While the moral role played by the story above is one of "encouragement", other stories offer warnings. Story II-14 is a good example of this. The main story tells of a young official, Wu Yue, who falls for the mysterious Lady Zhao who lives over the road from his lodgings. Wu tries to seduce her with gifts, drifting apart from a courtesan he had grown close to in the process. Eventually he gets to her bedchamber. At this stage, Lady Zhao's husband returns and catches him, letting him off the hook after payment of a hefty sum. The next day, Wu discovers that he has been tricked, and the shock makes him ill, leading to his death.

As in other stories involving criminal gangs, such as I-8, Ling does not pass judgement on the gang of cheats either through the storyteller or commentator; nor do they face any retribution through the events of the plot. Instead, the story is focused on the folly and weakness of Wu Yue, and it is Wu Yue who pays the ultimate price for these shortcomings. The two ventriloquist's dummies work in tandem to shift the blame onto Wu Yue, each taking advantage of the voice characteristic of their respective implied social positions. For example, this is the attitude of the commentator when the idea of seducing Lady Zhao first occurs to him:

> [Wu] thought to himself, “She’s been so kind, and also her husband isn’t here; there must be a hope of success. {A tree must be rotten before insects infest it} What a great chance!
>
> 心裏想到「他有此美情，況且大夫不在，必有可圖。【木必先蠹也，而後蟲生之。】煞是好機會！」[112]

The sardonic aside makes it clear that Wu’s ultimate fate is down to his innate moral weakness. It is worth noting that in the metaphor, the fraudsters are compared to a natural phenomenon existing outside the world of human morals; as such they cannot be criticised for their actions. This particular instance is also an example of heteroglossia, where the speech of the character Wu Yue expresses his intention to seduce Lady Zhao while simultaneously being part of an authorial attempt to undermine him.

The storyteller persona subsequently highlights the pathetic side to Wu’s character in the depths of his obsession with Lady Zhao, using detached humour rather than literary sarcasm:

[112] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.244.

> His face turned from red to white, and then from white all the way back to red again. He picked up his chopsticks the wrong way round and knocked over his cup of wine, as he started to lose control of his hands and feet. When he saw the maid had gone out, he dashed over to Lady Zhao's side and knelt down, crying out, "Pity me, my lady, and save my life!"
>
> 面孔紅了又白，白了又紅，箸子也倒拿了，酒盞也潑翻了，手腳都忙亂起來。覷個丫鬟走了去，連忙走過縣君這邊來，跪下道，「縣君可憐見，急救小子性命則個！」[113]

Here, the storyteller's folksy stylings exaggerate the image of the hapless Wu, driving a wedge between Wu and the reader by inviting the reader to regard Wu as an object of laughter: to pity him instead of identifying and empathizing with him.

Wu is indeed pitiable at this stage, with even the commentator agreeing on this point.[114] The effect is heightened by the reader being aware, thanks to the two introductory stories, that the whole episode is a trick. However, this pity is not enough to prevent Wu from being given a miserable end: out of money, he is deserted by his once-loved courtesan, mocked by his friends, and dies before he can be assigned a new post. The story ends with the storyteller addressing a stern warning to other young men:

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[113] Ibid., p.252.
[114] Ibid., p.256.

> What a pity that *Xuanjiao* Wu, who had good prospects, stirred up these evildoers, did not respect himself, got totally done over, and ended up in such a poor way. I urge young men whose blood has not settled, who lust after women, who do not know their place, and do not know what is good for them to take this as a warning.
>
> 可憐吳宣教一個好前程，惹着了這一些魔頭，不自尊重，被人弄得不尷不尬，沒個收場如此。奉勸人家少年子弟，血氣未定，貪婬好色，不守本分，不知利害的，宜以此為鑑。[115]

As before, Ling speaks through the storyteller to promote his preferred interpretation of the story. The moral lesson of the story is summed up and made concrete by the storyteller's shift in voice from narration to direct address. The lesson is rendered more persuasive through the way the ventriloquism of the storyteller and commentator foregrounds and mocks Wu Yue's flaws, thereby alienating the reader from him and ensuring that even without the deterrent effect of his sad end, his actions are regarded as products of weakness: something to be laughed at, despised, but not emulated.

[115] Ibid., p.257.

This shifting of blame onto the victims of a crime is not unique to this story, and is used on multiple occasions to heighten the "warning" aspect of morality in the collections. Perhaps the cruellest example of this is the introductory story to I-16, in which the implied author ventriloquises through storyteller and commentator to hold forth on the role of women:

> It has always been the case that women should never get involved in things that are not their business. It is best that their actions are circumspect. {Good words. Women should listen} It is fine if their husband is at home, but if he is not, they should but cloister themselves away in the deepest boudoir. Then, they can sleep on a high pillow with no worries; if they flippantly get involved in things, then something bad will inevitably come of it.
>
> 元來大凡婦人家，那閒事切不可管，動止最宜謹慎【好話，婦人宜聽】丈夫在家時還好，若是不在時，只宜深閨靜處，便自高枕無憂；若是輕易攬着個事頭，必要纏出些不妙來。[116]

The mock dialogue between storyteller and commentator here is, sure enough, backed up by the events in the story. When their husbands are away, two sisters-in-law let another woman into their house. She appears helpful, and eventually even marries the

[116] Ibid., p.230.

father of their husbands. However, it is all an elaborate plot and the two women are abducted, never to be seen again. While the storyteller and commentator initially warn against women not staying in their place, the final judgement of the storyteller is that blame also lies with the father, who wanted to remarry without the expense of the matchmaking process: he "desired the moon in the heavens, and lost treasure down on earth" 貪着天上月，失卻世間珍, as the final poem puts it.[117] The commentator even expresses admiration for the abductors: "Like a golden cicada discarding its shell, leaving not a trace. True masters." 金蟬脫殼，絕無痕迹，真是高手.[118]

While this seems callous, it is best understood in terms of the centripetal morality and belief in predestination expressed in the texts, in which moral behaviour is determined by one's social position and role. In this scheme, Wu Yue, the two women, and their father-in-law are all guilty of desires beyond their place, these desires leading to their punishment through karmic retribution. Ling's dual dummies carefully guide the reader towards this interpretation, and warn against straying outside the bounds of one's existing social position.

Whether the aim of the story is to "encourage" or to "warn", Ling uses his textual roles as storyteller and commentator in order to control the moral interpretation of the

[117] Ibid., p.232.
[118] Ibid., p.232.

story and steer the readership towards one particular moral lesson. In the case of Liu Yuanpu, this requires him to intercede in order to maintain Liu's image as a paragon of virtue even when the character performs some ethically dubious acts; this necessarily results in a paring away of nuance from the portrayal of Liu, robbing the story of a certain amount of extra depth, but it is certainly effective in the aim of creating a positive moral role model. Conversely, in the case of Wu Yue, the ventriloquistic pairing of commentator and storyteller work together to first insinuate that he has a "rotten" core, and then to alienate the reader from the pathetic figure he is reduced to so that he is seen as an object of laughter rather than a being worthy of identifying with. In both of the stories above, Ling accomplishes his aims largely though ventriloquism of the storyteller and commentator roles, with only very minor use of the role of the writer to alter the events of the plot as seen in the source materials.

Moral didacticism II: plot alterations

However, on certain occasions the role of the writer is more prominent. The effect of this role can be to introduce a moral message not implied by the source, or to heighten the effect of the inherent moral lesson of the plot. The usual way that this is accomplished is by the addition of minor significant details and tweaking the ending

of the story to render it more compatible with the idea of karmic retribution, punishing a character whose moral wrongdoing has been selected for criticism.

For example, II-36 tells the story of Wang Jia 王甲, a fisherman who though poor is always generous with what little money he has, regularly donating money to Buddhist monks. One day, he finds a precious mirror while out fishing. A passing Persian merchant recognises the mirror and tells them that it should not be shown to others lightly. It has the power to draw treasures to it, and Wang is soon rich enough to stop working. He and his wife are uneasy about their newfound wealth, however, and donate the mirror to a nearby temple. The abbot Falun 法輪 pretends to not care about worldly wealth, but secretly makes a copy of the mirror to keep on display and hides the genuine article away. Later, Wang and his wife run out of money and ask to borrow the mirror back; as it is a fake, their situation does not change. Rumours that the monks have hidden the mirror start to fly, and they reach the ear of the corrupt official Hun Yao 渾耀. Hun resolves to obtain the mirror, and arrests Falun on bribery charges to force him to reveal its location. He is beaten savagely and dies in jail. Meanwhile, Falun's deputy Zhenkong 真空 takes the opportunity to escape with the mirror and the treasure it has accumulated, and the guards Hun sends to raid the temple arrive too late to find anything. While on his escape, Zhenkong is intercepted by a spirit who scares off his retinue and demands the mirror. He abandons his cart

full of treasure and runs off into the forest clutching the mirror, but is dragged off by a fierce tiger. That night, Wang and his wife have a dream in which they are told the location of Zhenkong's abandoned cart of treasure. They take the treasure home, but do not find the mirror. The next night, they have a second dream which tells them not to look for the mirror as it has departed this world. They remain rich for the rest of their lives on the recovered treasure.

While the story as found in *Erpai* is largely very similar to the source material in *Yijian zhi*,[119] it differs in several key areas. Firstly, Ling emphasises that Wang and his wife were generous in donating what little money they had even when they were poor. This detail is not found in the source, which merely states that "what they caught in their nets was just sufficient to feed them" 網罟所得，僅足以給食.[120] Ling's version stresses that the poor couple are morally deserving of the great fortune they receive. The other major differences are found in the ending of the story. In the source, the Zhenkong character (unnamed in *Yijian zhi*) is not killed by the tiger, but escapes after tossing away the mirror. He returns to the temple to tell of his experience, and then vanishes. The source hints that he lived a life of wealth on the treasure he ran away with. Evidently, this arrangement of the ending is more credible

[119] Hong Mai 洪邁, "Jiazhou jiangzhong jing" 嘉州江中鏡, *Yijian zhiwu* 夷堅支戊 j.9, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.873-874.
[120] Ibid., p.873.

if, as in *Yijian zhi*, the story is presented as an actual happening: the Zhenkong character needs to survive and tell of what happened to him for the details of the encounter with the tiger to be passed on. However, it is undeniably unsatisfying in moral terms. Ling's alterations, which leave the evil characters Falun and Zhenkong dead and the good characters wealthy and alive, allow the story to sustain a moral interpretation that is inapplicable to the source.

Another example, this time of alterations that serve to highlight a moral already present in the source, is story I-32. In *Erpai*, the story goes as follows. Around Mianyang, the custom is for people to show off their wives at every possible opportunity. Tie Ming 鍊銘 has the most beautiful wife in the area, Lady Di 狄氏, and Hu Sui 胡綏 the second most beautiful, Lady Men 門氏. Both men desire the other's wife, and so deliberately cultivate a friendship. Tie has a straightforward personality, while Hu is more cunning; Tie is frank about wanting to sleep with Men, while Hu deliberately keeps his desires hidden. Tie discusses his desires with his wife and enlists her help. She makes friends with Men and takes her to watch Hu and Men carouse with courtesans in an effort to arouse her. However, this scheme backfires, as Di starts to lust after Hu. After lulling Tie into a false sense of security by declining his drunken suggestion to swap partners, Di and Hu get Tie drunk and have sex. Later, they organise for Tie to visit a constant stream of courtesans to keep him out of

the house so they can conduct their affair. Soon, Tie gets ill from all this exertion and is confined to bed, but Hu and Di carry on sleeping with each other in the same house. Once, Tie catches sight of Hu in his house, but he is ill and fevered, and believes Di when she says it was a vision brought on by his desire for Men. Hu then dresses up as a ghost to reinforce this impression. Soon after, Hu also falls ill from sexual exhaustion, and the now recovered Tie begins a secret affair with Men behind his back. Hu dies from his illness, and soon after Di also sickens and dies. Tie then marries Men and they have an honest and happy life together.

In the source tale in *Mideng yinhua* 覓燈因話 (Stories Told While Searching for the Lamp), however, the ending is rather different. While Hu is still punished with death for his immorality and trickery, the source only mentions that Tie's revenge came in the form of Hu's wife and daughters fornicating with "others" 妻女皆淫於人.[121] In contrast to *Erpai*, which chooses to highlight Men and Tie's affair and eventual marriage, the source is non-specific, and so the impact of the karmic retribution suffered by Hu is less strong. It is also notable that Ling chose to kill off Lady Di for her own sexual misdeeds, strengthening the tone of retribution in the story. Meanwhile, Tie is punished for his own improper lust through losing much of his wealth, though his happier fate also illustrates the benefit of repenting for one's

[121] Shao Jingzhan 邵景瞻, "Wo fashi ruding lu" 臥法師入定錄, *Mideng yinhua* 覓燈因話 j.2, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.728.

mistakes. Ling's alterations in this story serve to throw the moral warnings and encouragements of the source into sharper relief. It is also notable that, as in other stories, Ling has exaggerated the erotic portions of this story for entertainment purposes, at the same time as balancing these out to some extent with a stronger moral message.

Finally, Ling also uses his role as writer in order to alter his sources for didactic purposes in less drastic ways. Story I-39 tells of Guo Saipu 郭賽璞, a so-called "Heavenly Master" 天師, and a female shaman who claim supernatural powers. They are invited to pray for rain during a drought. When the rain does not come by the appointed day, they blame the local official for being corrupt, and extract bribes from wealthy families in exchange for not accusing pregnant women of bearing "drought demons" 旱魃. When the second deadline passes without any rain, the official kills the shamans and prays for rain himself; it duly arrives. Ling's chosen theme for the story is the criticism of charlatans and fraudsters masquerading as shamans, and he uses his role as writer to enhance this criticism. While the version in *Erpai* is relatively close to the source from *Taiping guangji*,[122] Ling sharpens his criticism of the charlatans by adding the detail that Guo and the female shaman are conducting a secret affair in order to highlight their moral degeneracy.

[122] Li Fang 李昉 et.al., "Di Weiqian" 狄惟謙, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 j.396, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.756.

Moral didacticism III: audience ventriloquism

The first section on moral didacticism showed how ventriloquism through the textual roles of storyteller and commentator was used to promote a specific moral interpretation of the stories. This section illustrates how ventriloquistic techniques are also used to defend these interpretations. One of the most eye-catching examples is when the voice of an imagined reader is introduced into the text, enabling debates to be staged between them and the storyteller, which of course the storyteller always wins. This brings the total number of "dummies" in the text to three: storyteller, commentator, and "reader". As ever, while this device involves the pretence of multiple independent voices in the story, they are in fact all subordinate to the author's intentions. One criticism that is repeatedly rebutted using this technique is that the fatalistic worldview put forward in the text discourages hard work: the storyteller rebuts it twice, in I-1 and I-40, using similar arguments each time. Here is the rebuttal from I-40:

> Storyteller, if what you say is true, then people do not need to study and learn hard, they can just rely on the fortune in their destiny. Reader, that is not the case. The saying goes, "Work hard at what is up to me; accept what is up to Heaven". Good fortune follows enthusiasm: that

those people who are most diligent find it easier get fortune in the end is common sense. That's why it is said that "Heaven does not turn its back on the hardworking".

說話的，依你這樣說起來，人多不消得讀書勤學，只靠著命中福分罷了。看官，不是這話。又道是:「盡其在我，聽其在天。」只這些福分又趕著興頭走的，那奮發不過的人終久容易得些，也是常理。故此說:「皇天不負苦心人。」[123]

Here, the storyteller fends off the criticism by taking control of it, steering the reader towards an argument that he has a ready answer to. It is a version of the "straw man" debating tactic beloved of politicians; by drawing attention to it he has made his own argument stronger. In addition to ventriloquizing the audience, it is also notable that "common sense" and a whole string of established quotations are invoked to support his argument, appropriating the accumulated wisdom of the ancients to the cause in an example of upstream ventriliquism. The storyteller uses the same techniques of audience ventriloquism combined with upstream ventriloquism to defend against the charge that the often patchy workings of karmic retribution in real life, for example prisoners being wrongly accused or people who have illicit affairs ending up happily married,[124] disprove his metaphysical views.

[123] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.636.
[124] The storyteller asserts that wrongly accused prisoners must have done something wrong in a previous life; previous lives are also used to explain the decently married illicit lovers. See Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.156-157; 541-542.

Other instances of ventriloquizing the audience have a dual purpose, ostensibly tying up loose ends in the plot while actually promoting the concept of predestination. This example is from story I-1. The main character Wen Ruoxu 文若虛 has just made a fortune selling oranges in a foreign land after a long run of bad luck in his trading, including an attempt to sell fans in Beijing which rotted after a rainy summer. Wen's luck is that in the foreign country, they value silver coins based on the face design rather than the weight. An imagined audience member finds this part of the tale too hard to swallow:

> Storyteller, you are wrong! If silver is so worthless in that country that they trade it like this, then why do those seasoned sailors who take silks and satins with them not sell them for money to take back, making 100 times the profit? {A detailed rebuttal, that's how you know it is close to the truth} Reader, there is something you don't know. In that country, when they see silks and such like, they exchange them for goods. Our people also want their goods- that's the only way they get a profit. If they sold [the silks] for money, then the people of that place would pay them in [high value silver coins with] dragon and phoenix or human figure designs to give a good price. But the amount of silver is still the same, so [the Chinese merchants] don't get a good deal. Now, they are buying snacks, and so they pay with low value coins. We only care about the weight, and so make a profit. Storyteller, you're wrong

again! If it's as you say, then why don't those sailors buy snacks and sell them for low value coins: wouldn't that be profitable? Why would they use large amounts of capital to buy in their goods? Reader, it's not like that either. This person got this windfall by chance, he took the oranges with him and got lucky. If he deliberately tried to take them a second time, then if he wasn't lucky for a few days then [the oranges] would all have rotted. It's just like when Wen Ruoxu tried to sell fans when he was out of luck. {Thoroughly penetrating} Fans are something you can store, and they still ended up like this; what about fruits? This is the way it is; one cannot hold obstinately to a biased view of the issue.

說話的，你說錯了!那國裡銀子這樣不值錢，如此做買賣，那久慣漂洋的帶去多是綾羅緞匹,何不多賣了些銀錢回來，一發百倍了?【駁得細，方知近實】看官有所不知：那國裡見了綾羅等物，都是以貨交兌。我這裡人也只是要他貨物，才有利錢，若是賣他銀錢時，他都把龍鳳、人物的來交易,作了好價錢，分兩也只得如此，反不便宜。如今是買吃口東西，他只認做把低錢交易，我卻只管分兩，所以得利了。說話的，你又說錯了！ 依你說來，那航海的，何不只買吃口東西，只換他低錢，豈下有利？反著重本錢，置他貨物怎地？看官，又不是這話。也是此人偶然有此橫財，帶去著了手。若是有心第二遭再帶去，三五日不遇巧，等得希爛。那文若虛運未通時賣扇子就是榜樣。【極透】扇子還放得起的，尚且如此，何況果品？是這樣執一論不得。[125]

[125] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.11.

Here, the commentator also steps in to support the storyteller's explanation of the holes in the plot. As in the previous example, the audience are made to ask two questions which can both be thoroughly answered by the storyteller, whose answers are supported by the commentator. While there may appear to be three voices in the conversation, the voices are all controlled by the repressed presence of the author, and work in unison towards a single aim. The exchange is guided towards the firm conclusion that all is down to the ineffable workings of fate and thus beyond argument. Having been enlisted to guide the "conversation" to this conclusion, the voice of the "reader" is then silenced. In addition to shoring up a less credible aspect of the plot, the exchange also promotes the moral idea of predestined fortune by stressing the role that luck had to play in Wen's trading success. This is no accident: where the explanation of plot holes cannot so readily be harnessed to promote a moral point, Ling's dummies generally ignore them.

However, on occasions plot holes may be actively highlighted. This is especially true where the supernatural, which Ling had an ambivalent attitude toward, is concerned. In II-6, the ghost of Li Cuicui appears to a servant of her father's at what appears to the servant to be a lavish mansion, but the next day when the servant leads the father to the location, there is nothing but ruins. The commentator notes, "That she can appear to the servant and not the father is something else I cannot understand" 能幻

形見僕而不見父，亦所不解.[126] The fact that holes in the plot are mostly ignored, sometimes explained away, and occasionally highlighted demonstrates that Ling was actually not particularly concerned about these potential literary defects in his stories. Instead, they are important to him only as a means to put across a moral point, or to express his gentle scepticism of the supernatural. This underlines the way in which in Ling's reimagination of the short story, functional effect was his overriding concern.

Entertainment in didacticism

Ling ensures that the didactic passages in his collections also contribute to their entertainment value. The storyteller's use of a strongly narrative form of argument, as analysed above in the first section on political discursion, not only acts to bolster his case through the air of inevitability so cultivated, it also maintains reader interest through the generation of narrative tension. This particular argument also uses humour to mock the pedantic Confucians that the storyteller loves to set up as straw men. While this first and foremost helps to demolish counterarguments to the implied author's case by deriding and delegitimizing those who hold these views, it also creates entertainment through the incongruity of these figures of nominal authority being painted as utter buffoons. The techniques of exaggeration and caricature deepen this effect, as the officials are held up as objects of ridicule.

[126] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.117.

This approach is also evident in story II-12, which exposes the inflexibility and prejudice of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). In the introductory story, Zhu Xi is outwitted by a poor man who buries a fake gravestone on a rich man's prime grave plot and then accuses the rich man of stealing it from him. Zhu Xi uncovers the fake gravestone and assigns the plot to the poor man thanks to his bias against rich people. He then congratulates himself:

> He said to himself, "Who else but me would be willing to get rid of the powerful and support the weak like this?" He was deeply satisfied, but how could he have known he had fallen for a fraudster's trick!
>
> 自家道:「此等鋤強扶弱的事，不是我，誰人肯做?」深為得意。豈知反落了奸民之計。[127]

Here, ventriloquism of Zhu Xi's inner thoughts highlights his sense of pride, which is immediately revealed as misplaced by the events of the story. The storyteller uses Zhu Xi's foolishness to criticise the type of impractical Confucian he stands for. At the same time, the audience is provided with a laugh at Zhu Xi's expense,

[127] Ibid., p.212.

contributing entertainment value to the story. This entertainment value is further heightened by the story's transgressive nature, criticising the symbol of orthodox state Confucianism. In this way, Ling entertains his readers by making them laugh at characters and opinions opposed by the implied author.

This is not the only way in which Ling incorporates entertainment into didactic passages. This extract comes from story I-37, in which the main character Qutu Zhongren is called to the underworld to answer for a life of indiscriminate hunting and meat-eating, before being released back to the world to warn others against killing. The story opens with a discursive tangent on meat-eating:

> So, all living things in the world are given birth to by Heaven and Earth, and all have sound, breath, knowledge, and feeling, though they may be of different types to humans. [However], the desire to stay alive and the fear of death always remains the same; repayment of gratitude and retribution for grudges always works on one principle only. It is just that humans are a bit smarter and more ingenious than them, and so can use techniques to control them, meaning that people end up driving oxen, harnessing horses, and hunting with hawk and hound. Some are still dissatisfied with this, and kill or maim who knows how many lives for sake of their mouths and tongues. These animals are too weak to resist, and so lie helpless for the knife and chopping block. But when their death approaches, they will fly up and screech in

pandemonium, and try to escape in any and every direction: are they insensate, ignorant of life and death, presented for your delectation? In the world, the argument of those who are greedy and bloodthirsty, and of pedantic Confucian petty scholars goes “Heaven birthed these myriad creatures for humans to live on, and so eating them is not a crime”. {One cannot blame the greedy and bloodthirsty ones, but the pedantic Confucian petty scholars are especially vile! This is what is known as “getting closer in principle, but gravely disrupting the truth”.} I don’t know if these words were spoken to them by the Lord of Heaven personally, or if they made them up themselves? If you accept that “as humans can eat animals, it is Heaven’s intention that they are for humans to live on”, then as tigers and leopards can eat humans, are we to believe that Heaven birthed humans in order for tigers and leopards to live on? Mosquitoes and horseflies can suck human blood; can it be that Heaven birthed humans in order for mosquitoes and horseflies to live on? If tigers, leopards, mosquitoes and horseflies could talk, speak, write, and do things in the same way [that humans can], I expect this is what they would say: would humans be willing to accept this argument? From ancient times, learned and senior monks have urged people to abstain from killing and to release animals back to the wild, and they have said much on the matter. I cannot describe it all here, and I am just casually speaking straightforwardly to get this off my chest for your amusement, and to see if you think what I say is reasonable or not.

話說世間一切生命之物，總是天地所生，一樣有聲有氣有知有覺，但與人各自為類。其貪生畏死之心，總只一般；銜恩記仇之報，總只一理。只是人比他靈慧機巧些，便能以術相制，弄得駕牛絡馬，牽蒼走黃，還道不足，為著一副口舌，不知傷殘多少性命。這些眾生，只為力不能抗拒，所以任憑刀俎。然到臨死之時，也會亂飛亂叫，各處逃藏，豈是蠢蠢不知死活任你食用的?乃世間貪嘴好殺之人與迂儒小生之論，道:「天生萬物以養人，食之不為過。」【貪嘴好殺者不足怪，迂儒小生尤可恨！所謂彌近理而大亂真者也。】這句說話，不知還是天帝親口對他說的，還是自家說出來的？ 若但道「是人能食物,便是天意養人」，那虎豹能食人，難道也是天生人以養虎豹的不成？蚊虻能噆人，難道也是天生人以養蚊虻不成？ 若是虎豹蚊虻也一般會說、會話、會寫、會做，想來也要是這樣講了，不知人肯服不肯服？ 從來古德長者勸人戒殺放生，其話盡多，小子不能盡述，只趁口說這兒句直捷痛快的與看官們笑一笑，看說的可有理沒有理？[128]

This passage sees Ling use the same rhetorical techniques that have been analysed in other extracts quoted above to make the case against meat-eating: the storyteller dummy ventriloquises “learned and senior monks” in support of his argument, uses downstream ventriloquism to undermine those who oppose his opinions in an example of heteroglossia, categorises his opponents as either “greedy and bloodthirsty” or “pedantic Confucian petty scholars”, and, through the use of an

[128] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.595.

informal idiom, positions himself as a channel of the plain-speaking good sense of the average person. The commentator dummy is also deployed to back up the argument on a more sophisticated level, subsequently citing Confucius and Mencius in support of the storyteller.[129]

At the same time, the argument is also highly entertaining. Like the arguments on famine and autopsy above, this discursion involves the audience entering a "double-levelled world view", which aids the aims of both didacticism and entertainment. While entertainment can be derived from complicity in the illusion that the humorous arguments are being put across by a marketplace storyteller, the educated audience of the work, familiar with a fellow literatus's role in writing the stories, understands that it is the well-thought and earnestly-held views of the implied author that are being expounded.

The argument above is entertaining in simpler ways too. The entertainment value comes partly from its comic depiction of talking and arguing animals, but also from the unique and fresh perspective that the storyteller has taken in developing his

[129] "Rotten Confucians see those who abstain from killing as [followers of] heterodoxy. I do not know whether Confucius's refusal to use fishing nets or shoot at sleeping birds, or Mencius's [opinion that the ideal gentleman] 'cannot bear to see' [an animal die once he has seen it alive] and 'cannot bear to eat' [an animal once he has heard its sound], are also heterodoxy? 腐儒見戒殺者便目為異端，不知孔之不網、不射宿，孟之不忍見、不忍食亦異端否？". Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.596.

argument; while there is nothing new in the thesis that one should avoid eating meat, this line of reasoning offers an interesting and lively way of justifying that conclusion. Feng Baoshan has termed this feature *liqu* 理趣 or "the interest of reason". He identifies lively, plain language, use of colloquialisms, and a sense of surging, irresistible momentum as characteristic of such passages,[130] all features present in this extract. Similarly, Fu Chengzhou recognises that some of the more "radical" ideas in the stories, such as a complaint about the double standards applied when men and women remarry in II-11,[131] can be considered *qi*.[132] This being the case, the novelty and freshness of these ideas in themselves can provide entertainment to the readers. Ling's use of these techniques and style ensures that even in his most overtly discursive and didactic sections the entertainment value of the stories is enhanced, achieving an organic combination of entertainment and purpose.

Relevance

A further feature that enhances the didactic effect of the stories while also making them more entertaining is their contemporary relevance. Relevance helps the stories speak to their time and give immediacy and force to political discursions and didactic points. At the same time, the relevance or otherwise of a story is one of the key

[130] Feng Baoshan, *Ling Mengchu*, p.72.
[131] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.193.
[132] Fu Chengzhou, "Ling Mengchu de shangqiguan yu *Erpai* zhi qi", p.24.

drivers behind it being told: a story "simply would not be recounted unless it was 'storyworthy' … unless it made a point relevant to the speaker, the audience, and the world in which they find themselves".[133] Relevance helps to generate, capture, and sustain an audience's interest in a story, and has significance above and beyond impact on its didactic message. Leo Tak-Hung Chan gives the example of the Tang *chuanqi Bu Jiang Zong baiyuan zhuan* 補江總白猿傳 (A Supplement to Jiang Zong's Biography of the White Ape), in which Ouyang He's 歐陽紇 (538-570) wife is impregnated by the titular ape. This could be read as a mischievous mocking of Ouyang He's son, a minister who was said to look somewhat like a gibbon.[134] While this context gives the story a political point, it also brings humour to the fantastical tale, thus making it more entertaining for the reader. The political angle also provides the reader with more motivation to retell the story; as will be argued in the next chapter, the "retellability" of a story was considered one of the markers of entertainment in Ling's time.

Ling's fiction, too, is tightly connected to its contemporary context in the late Ming. Overall, *Erpai* contains a far higher proportion of stories set in the Ming era than *Sanyan*: over two thirds of the *Sanyan* tales are set in earlier times, against half in

[133] Chan, "Text and Talk: Classical Literary Tales in Traditional China and the Context of Casual Oral Storytelling", p.41.
[134] Ibid., p.40.

Erpai. Late Ming (Jiajing 嘉靖 era (1522-1566) or later) stories are also more common in *Erpai* than *Sanyan* by an appreciable margin.[135] Stories such as I-31, about a failed peasant rebellion led by a sect leader, and passages such as those from II-1 and II-31 analysed above, attacking famine policy and the interpretation of autopsy laws respectively, speak directly to the concerns of the age, while the ever-present moral didacticism tackles what many saw as a pressing decline in contemporary morals. The large number of characters from relatively low social positions and the effort that Ling expends in stereotyping their personalities based on their identity also serves to broaden the relevance of the stories, by creating generalised characters resembling people encountered by his readers in their everyday life, as opposed to specific characters from more exalted social strata who his readers would be less likely to have encountered personally. The presence of such characters also enables stories set in previous dynasties to remain relevant to the late Ming reader. This concern with contemporary relevance is visible too in minor details: Feng Baoshan notes that all the stories in the collections, no matter when the events of the narrative are said to have taken place, use the coinage and currency standards in place in the late Ming.[136] These efforts to make the stories relevant to the lives of his contemporary readers hugely increase both the didactic effect and entertainment value of the collections.

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[135] Wang Zhizhong, "Ling Mengchu de xin gongxian: *Erpai* pingyi", p.95-96.
[136] Feng Baoshan, *Ling Mengchu*, p.56.

Conclusion

The above analysis demonstrates the skill with which Ling Mengchu uses the interactions between his textual roles to enhance the didactic effect of his stories. The careful harmonization of the multiple "voices" in the text to communicate one consistent moral or political message illustrates the overriding importance of a didactic message in his stories. This approach to creating fiction reflects the "this-worldly" concept of fiction Ling advances in the prefaces to *Erpai*.[137]

The importance of the utilitarian function of the stories is also reflected in the way that they have a specific practical purpose, and generally do not promote an unattainable, idealised level of moral excellence: this is shown by the way that the story of Wang Shiming in II-31 is used to criticise the policy of autopsy rather than praise Wang's extreme expressions of filial piety. The practical orientation of the stories is also shown in the direct, specific warnings dispensed through the storyteller: one example in story II-8 sees a variety of gambling frauds being introduced to the reader in the hope that they will not fall for them, or, even better, avoid gambling altogether.[138]

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[137] See p.76 above.
[138] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.140.

It should be mentioned that there are a handful of atypical stories which do not have a strong moral or political message. Stories I-4 and I-7, for example, are recounted in the drier tones of the chronicler, with little of the psychological insights, lively dialogue, storyteller disquisitions, and moral judgements of more typical stories. The introductory section in I-4 in particular is little more than a vernacular rendering of the original source materials. II-33, on the other hand, concentrates on depicting the extraordinary personalities or abilities of the main characters, with no attempt made to draw any lesson from their exploits. However, the vast majority of the stories in both collections have a strong moral or political message that animates them and gives purpose to their existence.

The didacticism in *Erpai* is focused and made more effective through the use of ventriloquistic techniques. These are evident both in the downstream ventriloquistic relationships between author, storyteller, and commentator, and in the upstream ventriloquism used by the storyteller in order to support his argument. The combination of these ventriloquistic techniques is seen to its best effect in the discursive asides such as those on famine relief, autopsy, and meat eating analysed above. These passages harness two textual roles to create what appear to be two distinct voices acting together to push one tightly focused political or moral message.

The use of such discursive asides for political discursion, and the coordinated ventriloquistic effort of storyteller and commentator to make one argument, mark an important development in *Erpai* as compared to the *Sanyan* stories, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. These discursive asides may be "bolted on" to the plot events of the stories, but great effort is made to ensure that they use a narrative style of argument that maintains audience interest while also contributing to the entertainment value of the stories.

After the discursive asides, the second major use of these two textual roles for didacticism is their effect in controlling the interpretation of the story. As seen in II-31, their combined efforts can change a tale about filial piety into one targeting the contemporary political practice of compulsory autopsy; II-21 is interpreted as a warning to criminal officials to be careful in their judgements rather than an illustration of divine dreams. The combined power of the storyteller role's folksy, common sense authority and the more conventional literati authority represented by the commentator role ensures that the intended interpretation of the story is credible and effective.

This tight control over the interpretation of the story is also used for the moral purposes of encouragement and warning. Both personas work together to create an

unblemished positive role model in Liu Yuanpu, conspiring to gloss over his faults; similarly, they also collaborate to present Wu Yue as an object of laughter in order to craft a more effective warning. The flipside of this obsession with control over interpretation is some loss of literary interest, as character personalities are drawn towards black and white extremes, with less scope for exploration of subtle nuances.

The commentator is also used as a device to insert tangential political points into stories where the plot would not support a longer tangent. This is the favoured means of attacking the constant plague of official corruption. Meanwhile, the storyteller takes full advantage of the liveliness of the vernacular language and his power to ventriloquise the thought processes of characters in order to make didactic points through mocking and deriding figures in the plot. Pedantic Confucians, stubborn officials, and even Zhu Xi are subjected to this treatment, which also contributes to the entertainment value of the stories. The technique of ventriloquizing others even extends to an imagined reader, in an attempt to promote the deterministic worldview of the stories through carefully raising, channelling, and demolishing arguments against it.

Most of the didactic techniques in *Erpai* are accomplished through the textual roles of storyteller and commentator. However, there are some instances in which the power

over interpretation wielded by these roles is not sufficient, and the role of the writer is called upon to alter the plots found in the source materials. This role may be used to introduce a moral reading to the story that did not exist in the source materials, as with II-36, or it may heighten and underline the existing moral interpretations of the sources, as in I-32.

The overriding feature of the didacticism in *Erpai* is the presence of multiple distinct voices working together to communicate a single message. This feature marks an innovation on the model of the *Sanyan* collections and highlights the didactic component of Ling's reimagination of the vernacular story, in which functional effect is privileged above all else. Using upstream ventriloquism, the storyteller speaks for the Emperor, the common sense of the people, and the law of the land in order to support his argument; similarly, he uses downstream ventriloquism to open up those he disagrees with to mockery, and even presumes to speak for the reader. These voices are in addition to the storyteller's "own" folksy voice, and the refined, apparently objective literati-like persona of the commentator. However, these myriad voices, like the dummies of a ventriloquist, work together in concert towards the promotion of the views of the implied author, who controls all these voices while hiding his own.

Chapter Four: Textual Roles and Entertainment

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CHAPTER 4

Entertainment in *Erpai*

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the ways in which the textual roles of writer, storyteller, and commentator are employed in *Erpai* to privilege the entertainment function of the work. Given the differences between didacticism and entertainment, in particular the greater rhetorical and communicative component of the former, the analysis in this chapter does not employ ventriloquism theory. Instead, the focus is on the ways in which the unique positions of each role relative to the events of the story are exploited to make the stories more entertaining. Before beginning the textual analysis, the term "entertainment" will be explored and defined with reference to pre-modern and modern sources, the relationship between fiction and entertainment traced, and features of fiction identified as entertaining in pre-modern Chinese discourse described.

Defining "entertainment"

First, the term "entertainment" will be explored and defined in relation to Chinese fiction. Though some modern scholars conceptualise entertainment as a phenomenon found in the intent behind a work's composition,[1] in this thesis the fundamental conception of entertainment is that it is a "reception phenomenon", existing in the

[1] Bryant and Miron, "Entertainment as Media Effect", p.550.

audience and not inherent to any work.[2] This section explores ways to define this reception phenomenon.

The usual equivalent for "entertainment" in Chinese is *yule* 娛樂, of which the first recorded usage is in this somewhat mocking passage from the *Shi ji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian):

> The King of Zhao has heard in secret that the King of Qin is proficient in the music of Qin; please present the King of Qin with a basin [to perform on], that both may be entertained.
>
> 趙王竊聞秦王善為秦聲，請奉盆缻秦王，以相娛樂。[3]

The constituent characters of the Chinese term foreground the idea of pleasure and enjoyment; these features form a key part of any definition of "entertainment". This contrasts with the etymology of the English word, which does not have the same associations. It originates from the Latin *inter* (among) and *tenēre* (to hold),[4] thus

[2] As conceptualised by scholars such as Bosshart, Macconi, Bates, and Ferri. See Bosshart and Macconi, "Defining 'entertainment'", p.4; Bates and Ferri, "What's Entertainment? Notes Toward a Definition", p.13.
[3] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 j.81, p.2442.
[4] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "entertain, v.", accessed June 12, 2015, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/62849.

suggesting that key to entertainment is the involvement and interaction of two or more entities; these could perhaps be people, or people and a text.

A more detailed understanding of entertainment in the context of pre-modern Chinese fiction can be gained through an examination of the writings of Chinese fiction aficionados and writers. More often than not, these figures did not actually use the term *yule*, but rather employed a range of different words to describe how the entertainment function of fiction operated; in doing so, they also illustrate the strong link between entertainment and fiction. Three of the more common ways in which literati described the entertainment derived from fiction are explored below.

Enjoyment

The first of these is the most straightforward, and has already been mentioned above: the idea of enjoyment. This aspect of entertainment, and its close relationship to fiction, is highlighted by Ling in story II-12:

> It has always been that all the books narrated do but tell of some romantic happenings and describe some unusual hearsay, *in an attempt to be pleasing to listen to*.

從來說的書不過談些風月，述些異聞，圖個好聽。[5] [emphasis added]

Ling describes the entertainment function of stories in terms of enjoyment, through being "pleasing to listen to" (and, by extension, read). This description also hints that this pleasure is a defining characteristic of the genre, and one of the basic motivations behind its production and consumption. Another example comes from the preface to *Gujin xiaoshuo*:

> When the Renshou Emperor was at leisure, he took pleasure in reading *huaben*…Thereupon, eunuchs searched widely for miracles from previous ages and the latest gossip from the alleyways, and hired people to perform them and present to the Emperor, in order to please the Imperial visage.
>
> 仁壽清暇，喜閱話本……於是內璫輩廣求先代奇蹟及閭里新聞，倩人敷演進御，以怡天顏。[6]

Again, the entertainment value of the "Song" *huaben* is described in terms of pleasure, and entertainment is cast as the primary motivating factor for both creating and reading the texts. However, despite this description of the entertainment factor in

[5] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.211.
[6] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646.

the history of the genre, the main message of Feng's preface is to assert the effectiveness of the vernacular story as a didactic tool. The preface to the c.1630 collection *Guzhang juechen* 鼓掌絕塵 (Clapping Hands to Rise Above the Worldly Dust), meanwhile, is more emphatic in highlighting the entertainment value of the work:

> The Master delivered the soon to be completed manuscript into my hands. As soon as I opened the pages, I could see it was full of all the courtesans between Heaven and Earth. These are described with vivid and rich colour, drifting and taking one on flights of fancy. Even among mature and upstanding Confucians there are none who would not read [the collection] avidly and delight in it.
>
> 主人取將竣之帙於手中，一展卷皆天地間花柳也。花紅柳綠，飄拂牽游，即老成端重之儒，無不快觀而欣焉。[7]

The claim that even staid Confucians would enjoy it has a twofold purpose: firstly, it defends the work against charges of indecency, and secondly, it acts as an advertisement for how enjoyable, and thus entertaining, the collection is. A further inference can be made, that the audience would read the work with the intention of

[7] Chicheng linhai yisou 赤城臨海逸叟, "*Guzhang juechen* xu" 《鼓掌絕塵》敘, in Jinmu sanren 金木散人, *Guzhang juechen* 鼓掌絕塵, p.485.

gaining pleasure from it. A final example is found in the preface to *Zhenzhu bo* 珍珠舶 (Ship of Pearls), which compares the fiction writer's collection of rare and unusual events to a merchant's search for precious jewels in their ship: both "help bring joy to the eyes of readers, and pleasure to the hearts of listeners" 俾觀者娛目，聞者快心.[8] This comparison is the source of the name of the collection. Yet again, entertainment is described in terms of pleasure and placed at the heart of the work.

Leisure and relaxation

Another term literati used to describe the entertainment derived from reading fiction is relaxation. This was hinted at in the quotation from the preface to *Gujin xiaoshuo* above, where the Emperor read *huaben* when he was "at leisure" 清暇.[9] Another example comes from a fabricated encounter between two pseudonyms of Feng Menglong in the preface to *Jingshi tongyan*: the writer of the preface describes a meeting with another literatus in a mountain hut, who "thereupon took out several *juan* of his newly printed book to go with our wine" 因出其新刻數卷佐酒.[10] Though the rest of the preface focuses on the didactic effect of the stories, this gives a revealing glimpse into how the stories were read by Feng and his friends, as something to read and discuss when relaxing over a few cups of rice wine.

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[8] Yuanhu yanshui sanren 鴛湖煙水散人, "*Zhenzhu bo* xu"《珍珠舶》序, *Zhenzhu bo* 珍珠舶, p.161.
[9] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646.
[10] Yuzhang wu'ai jushi 豫章無礙居士, "*Jingshi tongyan* xu" 《警世通言》敘, in Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.664.

The Song figure Qian Weiyan 錢惟演 (962-1034) also reportedly said that "seated, one reads the Classics and histories; reclining, one reads fiction; and on the toilet, one peruses short *ci* poems" 坐則讀經史，臥則讀小說，上廁則閱小詞,[11] illustrating the leisure context in which fiction was read. Closer to Ling's own time, the titles of the subdivisions of Hong Pian's 洪楩 (active 1550s) collection *Liushijia xiaoshuo* 六十家小說 (Sixty Stories) are richly redolent of long hours of leisure time, including the *Yuchuang ji* 雨窗集 (Rainy Window Collection), *Qizhen ji* 欹枕集 (Leaning on the Pillow Collection), and *Jiemen ji* 解悶集 (Dispelling Boredom Collection). Further evidence is seen in a preface to *Shi gong'an*, ironically one that seeks to promote a more serious attitude to the work:

> Please do not treat this as one would a normal piece of fiction, used merely for whiling away long afternoons and chasing away the demon of sleep, and nothing else.
>
> 幸勿作尋常說部，徒供消長晝遣睡魔而已也。[12]

[11] Qian Weiyan 錢惟演, cited from Ouyang Xiu 欧阳修, *Guitian lu* 歸田錄 j.2, p.5b, in *Zhongguo yeshi jicheng* 中國野史集成 v.6, p.676.
[12] Chicheng shanmei jushi 赤城珊梅居士, "*Huitu san gong qi'an* xu" 《繪圖三公奇案》序, in Anon., *Shi gong quan'an* v.2, p.2004.

Evidently, the author of the preface thought it normal for fiction to be read for entertainment in leisure time without thought of its moral lessons. In asking the reader to treat *Shi gong'an* differently, the writer underlines the perceived inferiority of works without practical purpose while revealing that one of fiction's fundamental characteristics is the provision of entertainment as a form of relaxation.

The importance of relaxation as a form of entertainment has a further important implication: that fiction designed to achieve this functional effect should be diverting, accessible and not too taxing to read. For works such as *Erpai*, therefore, creating a straightforward, intuitive appeal to their readership is a more pressing concern than aspirations to literary quality.

Desire to retell

Thirdly, the entertainment gained from a piece of fiction was also described by literati of the past in terms of a desire to retell the story in full or part. This is hinted at in the way Ling's near-contemporary Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610), whose brother Yuan Zhongdao once called on Ling in Nanjing, placed vernacular novels like *Shuihu zhuan* and *Jin ping mei* in a list of classic sources of quotes that any respectable drinker should be familiar with.[13] Writers also took pains to advertise that their works

[13] Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, *Shang zheng* 觴政, *Yuan Hongdao ji jianjiao* 袁宏道集箋校, p.1419.

would inspire the reader in conversation. The anonymous author of the 1640 short story collection *Huanxi yuanjia* 喜冤家 (Antagonists in Love), for example, claims that its sometimes racy content "enables the wise to derive topics for conversation from reading it" 使慧者讀之可資談柄.[14]

The *Erpai* prefaces also repeatedly stress that the stories can spark a desire to retell them in the reader, helping to provide fodder for conversations. In the introduction to the first collection Ling states that he selected tales that "could refresh the ears and eyes, or assist humorous banter" 可新聽睹、佐詼諧;[15] the preface to the second collection reiterates this, writing, "[I] reviewed anecdotes and novel tales that could supplement topics of conversation" 顧逸事新語，可佐談資者.[16] The theme is echoed in the preface to the compilation *Jingu qiguan*, which describes Ling's collections as "fit to be talked about" 足供談麈.[17] This emphasis on retelling hints at the wider social context of casual storytelling (of which more below) that the stories may have formed part of, as well as hinting at the "indirect audience" of the stories described in Chapter Two.

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[14] Xihu yuyin 西湖漁隱, "*Huanxi yuanjia* xu" 《歡喜冤家》敘, in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* series 1 no.44, p.6.
[15] Ling Mengchu, "Xu", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.
[16] Ling Mengchu, "*Erke pai'an jingqi* xiaoyin", *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.3.
[17] Xiaohua zhuren 笑花主人, "*Jingu qiguan* xu" 《今古奇觀》序, in Baoweng laoren ed., *Jingu qiguan*, *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng*, series 3 v.4, p.5.

The repeated appearance of the character *xin* 新, or "new", in the quotes above reinforces two features of the stories that help spark a desire to retell the stories. First, their novelty contributes to and combines with the extraordinary subject matter of the tales to pique reader interest, motivating the reader to tell the story again. Secondly, it underlines the contemporary relevance of the stories, explored in the previous chapter. Contemporary relevance enhances the entertainment value of a story by engaging the reader with subject matter that is close to the times they are experiencing, while also satisfying the human thirst for novelty. Furthermore, it is a key factor contributing to the "retellability" of the stories, providing material that the speaker has a reason to recount and the audience is motivated to listen to.

Modern academic definitions

Modern scholars have also attempted to arrive at an academic definition of entertainment, something that is harder than the word's ubiquity might suggest: "entertainment is difficult to define *because* everyone knows what it is, because it is a common-sense idea".[18] This difficulty is compounded by the subjectivity that is inevitable in any definition, as is evident from this list of six features of entertainment proposed by Bosshart and Macconi:

[18] Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, p.1; emphasis in original.

- psychological relaxation– It is restful, refreshing, light, distracting;
- change and diversion– It offers variety and diversity;
- stimulation– It is dynamic, interesting, exciting, thrilling;
- fun– It is merry, amusing, funny;
- atmosphere– It is beautiful, good, pleasant, comfortable;
- joy– It is happy, cheerful.[19]

A definition based on these overlapping and subjective features covers a broad range of possibilities from comedy shows to horror films, reflecting the huge variety of forms of entertainment on offer in the modern age. Despite this, the features "psychological relaxation", "change and diversion", "fun", and "joy" correspond neatly to the Chinese literati ideas of entertainment analysed above. Others have attempted to counterbalance the subjectivity inherent in features such as those listed above. Bates and Ferri do this by focusing "not on the response of a given individual, but rather on any subset of the audience as a whole"[20] in an attempt to minimise the effect of variations in individual taste.

Conclusion

[19] Bosshart and Macconi, "Defining 'entertainment'", p.4.
[20] Bates and Ferri, "What's Entertainment? Notes Toward a Definition", p.13.

Drawing together the various aspects explored above, "entertainment" is defined in this thesis as "feelings of enjoyment, relaxation, and interest (manifested as a desire to retell a story) in a subset of the audience of a piece of work". The adjectival form is similarly defined: "the ability of a piece of work to produce feelings of enjoyment, relaxation, and interest (manifested as a desire to retell it) in a subset of its audience". In this thesis, entertainment is seen as a reception phenomenon: the use of "entertainment" as a noun referring to a piece of fiction is avoided in view of the fact that such a work "often does more than entertain- or, put differently, entertainment functions are often intertwined with nonentertainment functions".[21] This is particularly true in the case of *Erpai* where the functions of entertainment and didacticism carry broadly equal weighting. In other words, the phrasing "*Erpai* is entertaining" is preferred to "*Erpai* is entertainment", a formulation with the inaccurate implication that the work has no other function.

The history of fiction, storytelling, and entertainment

Stories have been used by people to entertain themselves since time immemorial, and remain, along with song, the principal forms of entertainment to this day, though media and content have diversified dramatically. As demonstrated by the quotes from Chinese literati in the previous section, fiction as a genre was seen to be intimately

[21] Ibid., p.2.

related to entertainment. This section takes a further look at the traditional links between fiction, storytelling, and entertainment in China before contextualizing *Erpai*'s place in these traditions.

The English word "fiction" is, following common practice, used throughout this thesis as a translation for the Chinese term *xiaoshuo* 小說. However, the English word places an emphasis on the content being "constructed from nothing" (*xugou* 虛構 in modern Chinese) that is absent in the Chinese term. Consequently, the Chinese term covers a broader range of works than the English term. In particular, fiction was seen as being closely related to history. Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) regarded the ultimate predecessor of the genre as being Zhou dynasty *baiguan* 稗官, minor officials who acted in a semi-historical capacity to record street gossip for presentation to the court.[22] This link between fiction and history remained strong throughout pre-modern China, including in Ling's day: the preface to *Jingu qiguan* defines fiction as "the surplus of official history" 小說，正史之餘也,[23] while the preface to *Xingshi hengyan* suggests treating the *Sanyan* collections as "a complement to the *Six Classics* and the national histories" 《六經》、國史之補.[24] In addition to this link to history, fiction is also connected to oral storytelling traditions, both professional and

[22] Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書 j.30, p.1377. The historical existence of these officials is under debate.
[23] Xiaohua zhuren, "*Jingu qiguan* xu", in Baoweng laoren ed., *Jingu qiguan*, *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng*, series 3 v.4, p.1.
[24] Longxi keyi jushi 隴西可一居士, "Xu" 敘, in Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.900-901.

casual. This is hinted at etymologically by the presence of the character *shuo* 說 or "talk". Fiction's historical connections in the Chinese context are arguably reflected in its utilitarian functions, while its origins in storytelling gave rise to its entertainment functions. Therefore, this section focuses on the professional and amateur storytelling traditions that fed into *huaben* fiction.

Hu Shiying begins his analysis of *huaben* fiction by tracing the origins of the professional tradition. He identifies three distinct groups of people who related stories professionally in ancient China: "actors and dwarves" (*paiyou-zhuru* 俳優侏儒) whose storytelling formed part of a wider repertoire of performance skills, the above-mentioned *baiguan*, and "sorcerers" (*fangshi* 方士) who told exaggerated myths in order to increase their prestige.[25] Hu Shiying categorises these groups on a functional basis, noting that the only group to tell stories for entertainment was the "actors and dwarves"; the others had practical motivations (even though their stories may have subsequently been read as entertainment). This classification leads him to conclude that the "actors and dwarves" are the direct predecessors of the marketplace storytellers mimicked by Feng Menglong.[26] This demonstrates the way in which entertainment lies at the heart of both *huaben* fiction and the professional storytelling tradition that fed into it.

[25] Hu Shiying, *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun*, p.10.
[26] Ibid.

Parallel to this tradition of professional storytelling, there was also a tradition in which literati amateurs told stories amongst themselves. Termed "casual storytelling" by Patrick Hanan,[27] this tradition has received little critical attention relative to the professional tradition. While the professional tradition is generally associated with vernacular fiction, this casual tradition is one to which "classical literary tales … were indebted".[28] Entertainment features heavily in this tradition too, as this quote from He Bang'e 和邦額 (b.1748) illustrates:

> This year I am two score and four years of age, and I have never yet encountered an anomaly. But I often like to get together with a couple of friends. As we get ourselves drunk on wine or drink tea at a low table, we extinguish candles and talk of ghosts, or converse on fox-spirits under the moonlight. When the wild and bizarre enter into our conversations, I record them. As time passed I made them into a book, with which I casually amuse myself.[29]
>
> 予今年四十有四矣，未嘗遇怪，而每喜與二三友朋，於酒觴茶榻間滅燭譚鬼，坐月說狐，稍涉匪夷，輒為記載。日久成帙，聊以自娛 。[30]

[27] Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition*, p.187.
[28] Chan, "Text and Talk: Classical Literary Tales in Traditional China and the Context of Casual Oral Storytelling", p.34.
[29] Translation adapted from ibid., p.48-49.
[30] He Bang'e 和邦額, "Xu" 序, *Yetan suilu* 夜談隨錄, p.6.

He Bang'e's description of the casual social context in which these stories are told echoes the way in which fiction readers described entertainment in terms of relaxation. This amateur tradition differs from the professional tradition not only in the lack of a commercial context, but also in its dynamic. Instead of being one-directional, where a professional storyteller amuses an audience, these stories are "embedded in conversations where both the tellers and the listeners participate".[31] This conversational context also means that the teller relates these stories as much for their own entertainment as for the entertainment of the audience. Despite these differences, the two traditions share the fundamental characteristic of being based around entertainment.

Though this tradition was centred on the literati elite, there is evidence that storytelling sessions were used to explore themes on the fringes of what was appropriate. Just as the storytelling gatherings He Bang'e describes are centred on the paranormal, a topic outside the parameters of conventional acceptability which "the Master does not speak of" 子不語;[32] the gatherings simulated in *Erpai* through the persona of the commentator are also focused on a conventionally taboo subject, illicit

[31] Chan, "Text and Talk: Classical Literary Tales in Traditional China and the Context of Casual Oral Storytelling", p.37.
[32] Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 《論語》譯註, p.72.

sex. Though direct descriptions of casual storytelling in the Ming are hard to come by, there are indications that this was not an uncommon topic of conversation among literati at the time. The mid-Ming anecdote collection *Yecheng kelun* 冶城客論 (Discussions Between Guests in Yecheng) by the dramatist Lu Cai 陸采 (1497-1537) records stories he heard told by examination candidates in Nanjing (Yecheng) in casual storytelling contexts. The eroticism of one anecdote in particular[33] was felt by the Qing compilers of the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* to be so extreme as to be somewhat hard to believe:

> At the end of the *juan*, the work "Record of the Mandarin Ducks" describes the woman Ms. Shi conducting a tryst in her boudoir. There are a myriad forms of depravity, as if they were experienced personally and witnessed firsthand. This was the home of an official of the time. Who saw it and who spoke of it?
>
> 卷末鴛鴦記一篇，述施氏婦閨閣幽會之事，淫媟萬狀，如身歷目睹。此同時士大夫家也，誰見之而誰言之乎？[34]

[33] Lu Cai 陸采, *Yecheng kelun* 冶城客論, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu: zibu* 四庫全書存目叢書·子部 v.246, p.645.
[34] Ji Yun ed., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* j.144, p.3699.

The presence of a story such as this in a record of orally transmitted anecdotes suggest a willingness to explore erotic topics in the casual storytelling of the Ming period.

The influence of both casual and professional traditions is visible in *huaben* fiction and *Erpai* in particular. As discussed in Chapter One,[35] it is likely that Ling's fiction was partly influenced by the live art of storytelling, even though there is no direct genetic link between the prompt books of marketplace storytellers and written *huaben* fiction such as *Erpai*. The mimickry of professional storytellers evident in the "storyteller's manner" also illustrates that *Erpai* can be regarded as an offshoot of the professional storytelling tradition. *Erpai* also shares other features with this tradition: a one-way dynamic, in which Ling provides a text for the entertainment of a passive reader; and a commercial motivation.

At the same time, *Erpai* also shows common features and influences from the amateur storytelling tradition. Firstly, many of the stories were derived from literary tales, a genre intimately linked to literati storytelling. Another common feature is that, in addition to entertaining his audience, Ling also entertained himself through his "telling" of the stories in writing, as shown in his statement that he treated the

[35] See p.51.

composition of the stories "as a game to make myself happy" 以遊戲為快意耳.[36] This *telling* of stories for entertainment is one characteristic that differentiates the casual and professional traditions. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated below, Ling uses his role as commentator to simulate the casual atmosphere of a literati storytelling gathering on the page. In addition to this, the preoccupation with retellability expressed in the prefaces suggests that Ling envisaged the stories entering the casual storytelling tradition after publication, through being retold at social gatherings.

Features of entertaining fiction

Next, selected features of entertaining fiction will be analysed. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, theoretical exploration of literature's potential as a form of entertainment was sidelined in Chinese scholarly discourse in favour of a utilitarian view of literature. The previous chapter also showed how proponents of this dominant view of literature from Yang Xiong to Zhou Dunyi furthered their argument by criticising the triviality of literature that had no social purpose; this manner of reasoning further inhibited the comprehensive theorization of literature as a means for entertainment. Nevertheless, some ideas were developed on literary features that led

[36] Ling Mengchu, "*Erke pai'an jingqi* xiaoyin", *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.3.

to a work being entertaining; in the case of *Erpai*, the most relevant of these are "humour", "eroticism", and "the extraordinary".

Humour

Perhaps the most straightforward way to bring pleasure to one's readers is to make them laugh, and humour is the feature that will be examined first. One of the earliest and boldest acknowledgements of the validity of humorous literature comes from Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (c. 104- 30 BCE), in his supplement to the "Guji liezhuan" 滑稽列傳 (Biographies of the Jesters) in the *Shi ji*. While the original writer Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c.135 or 145- 86 BCE) required that the biographies contained some practical worth before inclusion in this section, Chu takes a broader approach, saying,

> A humble minister, I am fortunate to have been made an official for my knowledge of the Classics, but I also enjoy reading tales from other sources. I, in my audaciousness, have compiled another six pieces of words about jesters, placing them subsequently. The emotions may be inspired through reading them, and they are left for interested people in future generations to read, in order to bring joy to their hearts and surprise their ears.

臣幸得以經術爲郎，而好讀外家傳語。竊不遜讓，復作故事滑稽之語六章，編之左方。可以覽觀揚意，以示後世好事者讀之，以游心駭耳。[37]

Chu's additions are significant in that his criteria are that the stories are entertaining and of possible interest to future enthusiasts, while their practical role is left unmentioned. Furthermore, Chu's stressing of his credentials as a Confucian scholar and official, in addition to the inclusion of the stories in a history text, helps to lend legitimacy to the enjoyment of entertaining literature outside the orthodox canon.

Liu Xie also tackled the subject, providing an early definition of "humour" 諧:

> "Humour" mean "speaking" to "all". Words are simple and in accordance with popular tastes; all delight and laugh at them.

諧之言皆也。辭淺會俗，皆悅笑也。[38]

Though Liu recognised the entertaining power of humour and its ability to reach and affect a broad audience, he was damning about its uses in situations in which it had

[37] Chu Shaosun 褚少孫, writing in Sima Qian, "Guji liezhuan di bashiyi" 滑稽列傳八十一, *Shi ji* j.126, p.3203.
[38] Liu Xie, "Xieyin di shiwu" 諧讔第十五, *Wenxin diaolong* j.3, p.194.

no practical purpose, comparing it to the "vain laughter of a drowning man and the crazed songs of a criminal" 豈非溺者之妄笑，胥靡之狂歌歟.[39] For Liu, humour and its close cousin "allegory" 讔 were valid means of entertainment, here viewed as relaxation or "relieving weariness" 釋憊,[40] but only if they also had a moral purpose.

However, others collected jokes and humorous anecdotes free of such concerns. The earliest known compendium of Chinese jokes was the *Xiaolin* 笑林 (Forest of Laughs) compiled by Handan Chun 邯鄲淳 (132-220), now lost, though 29 items from it survive in later collections. Later works, such as the *Qiyan lu* 啟顏錄 (Record of Smiles) by Hou Bai 侯白 (n.d., Sui dynasty) continued this tradition, while Feng Menglong was a prolific recorder of humorous anecdotes in works such as *Xiao fu* 笑府 (Treasury of Laughs). Neither were jokes limited to specialised collections. The Han dynasty work *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (The Comprehensive Meaning of Customs), compiled by Ying Shao 應邵 (c.153-196), aimed at "returning all [customs] to their correct form" 咸歸於正,[41] though he also incorporated humorous anecdotes such as this one into his work:

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p.195.
[41] Ying Shao 應邵, "*Fengsu tongyi* xu" 《風俗通義》序, *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義, p.8.

In the state of Chen, the wife of Zhang Zhongjie was cooking in the kitchen. Going to the well, she asked Bojie, “How is my makeup today?” Bojie [Zhongjie’s elder brother] replied, “I’m Bojie”. She was deeply embarrassed. That evening, Bojie arrived and changed clothes. The woman tugged at his back and said, “This morning I made a big mistake, and addressed Bojie as you”. The reply came, “I am Bojie”.

陳國張仲嗜婦炊于竈下，至井上，謂伯嗜曰：「我今日粧好不？」伯嗜曰：「我伯嗜也。」婦大慙愧。其夕時，伯嗜到更衣，婦復遂牽其背曰：「今旦大誤，謂伯嗜爲卿。」答曰：「我故伯嗜也」。[42]

Humour as a means of entertainment is also found in Liu Yiqing’s 劉義慶 (403-444) *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Tales of the World Told Anew), again in the form of anecdotes such as the one below:

When Emperor Chien-wen (Ssu-ma Yü) was serving as Generalissimo Controlling the Army (345-361), he once came into the audience hall with Huan Wen. After the two had repeatedly yielded precedence to each other, Huan finally had no recourse but to go first. In doing so he said:

“The earl grasps his spear

[42] Ying Shao, *Fengsu tongyi*, p.587.

And goes ahead as the king's fore-rider."

Chien-wen countered with:

"There are no small and no great;

All follow the duke in his travels."[43]

簡文作撫軍時，嘗與桓宣武俱入朝，更相讓在前。宣武不得已而先之，因曰：「伯也執殳，為王前驅。」簡文曰：「所謂『無小無大，從公于邁』。」[44]

In this example, the humour is highly sophisticated and oblique, hinging on the reader's knowledge of history and classic works. Sima Yu 司馬昱 (320-372) was of higher status, but Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373) was senior in age, thus both attempted to yield precedence to the other. A further layer of meaning is that Huan Wen was planning an insurrection, and chose his quotation to express loyalty; the future emperor chose his reply to subtly reveal that he was aware of Huan Wen's ambitions. The humour is derived from recognition of the highly apposite quotes from the *Shi jing* they deploy to hint at their meaning.

[43] Mathers, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, p.60.
[44] Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, in Ling Mengchu, ed., *Shishuo xinyu guchui* 世說新語鼓 吹, *LMCQJ* v.7., p.58.

None of the humour in *Erpai* works on such a sophisticated level: it is generally more direct and straightforward. Nevertheless, the influence of the tradition of amusing anecdotal literature is visible, particularly in the introductory stories. Their brevity makes them an ideal vehicle for adapting more straightforward humorous literary language anecdotes into the vernacular, such as in the introduction to I-39 where Fan Ruyu 范汝輿 tricks the charlatan sorcerer Xia 夏 into eating dried dog shit in front of a crowd. This particular anecdote also illustrates the way in which humour is used in order to mock characters and character types, especially when a moral lesson can be drawn.

The use of humour is also prominent in earlier *huaben* fiction. For example, the story "Kuaizui Li Cuilian ji" 快嘴李翠蓮記 (The Tale of Garrulous Li Cuilian) from *Liushijia xiaoshuo* relies on the use of humorous rhymed language and the comic portrayal of the main character Li Cuilian for its effect. Similarly, story GJ-36 in the *Sanyan* collections relates the exploits of outlaws Master Song the Fourth 宋四公, Zhao Zheng 趙正, and Hou Xing 侯興. This story is highly episodical, and contains comic events and situations such as Zhao Zheng pissing in his sleeping master's mouth, finding pubic hairs in *mantou* 饅頭 stuffed with human meat, and people popping out from under a bed to surprise its occupants as they are busy having sex. Both stories hinge on their humorous content, and illustrate an established presence of

unsophisticated slapstick humour in the *huaben*. *Erpai* combines this slapstick comedy with a straightforward brand of humour influenced by certain literary language anecdotes.

Eroticism

Eroticism was also an important entertaining feature in vernacular fiction generally and *Erpai* in particular. However, due to the transgressive nature of sexual scenes, few critics dared to explore or promote it as entertainment. Instead, many mentioned eroticism in literature only to deplore it. Nevertheless, in the relatively open climate of the late Ming, a small number of writers did acknowledge the entertaining power of eroticism.

A hint is found in the *Erpai* storyteller's statement cited above, which explains that at root vernacular stories "tell of some romantic happenings … in an attempt to be pleasing to listen to" 談些風月……圖個好聽.[45] This is a clear admission that eroticism was one of the ways that vernacular stories entertained their readers.

A further hint is seen in the preface to *Guzhang juechen*, also cited above. The reference to the delight readers would derive from reading about "all the courtesans

[45] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.211.

between Heaven and Earth" 天地間花柳[46] demonstrates that this work was marketed through subtle promotion of its erotic content. This is also evident in the work's division into four sections, "wind" 風, "flowers" 花, "snow" 雪, and "moon" 月, which together make up a four character phrase used to describe romantic affairs. The preface to *Huanxi yuanjia*, too, contains a reference to the tendency of fiction to entertain through eroticism. The writer's opening claim that "those who enjoy conversation cast their ambition to the bounds of Heaven and Earth; those who write fiction set their minds roaming through the lands of romance" 喜談天者放志乎乾坤之表；作小說者遊心於風月之鄉[47] casts eroticism as a defining feature of fiction and, through the parallel with casual conversation, demonstrates that it is also part of fiction's entertainment value.

Li Yu's early Qing novel *Rou putuan*, meanwhile, describes the entertainment potential of the erotic more openly:

> The sentiment of recent times is to fear reading the classics of the sages and the exegeses of the worthies, and to enjoy perusing the unofficial histories of the gossip collectors. Even within the unofficial histories of the gossip collectors, people are fed up of hearing about

[46] Chicheng linhai yisou, "*Guzhang juechen* xu", in Jinmu sanren, *Guzhang juechen*, p.485.
[47] Xihu yuyin, "*Huanxi yuanjia* xu", in *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* series 1 no.44, p.1.

matters of loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness, and enjoy reading books of pornography, deviance, absurdity, and invention.

近日的人情，怕讀聖經賢傳，喜看稗官野史。就是稗官野史裏面，又厭聞忠孝節義之事，喜看淫邪誕妄之書.[48]

This overtly acknowledges the preference of late Ming/early Qing audiences for erotic entertainment over more wholesome books. The book goes on to vividly describe the enjoyment audiences gain from eroticism, talking of "using matters of sexual desire to titillate him [the reader] until he is reading with gusto" 把色慾之事去歆動他，等他看到津津有味之時.[49] While the broader argument is for the effectiveness of erotic literature as a didactic instrument, the popularity of erotic entertainment among audiences is sharply underlined.

The extraordinary

The "extraordinary" is arguably the most important feature in early discussions of entertainment in literature. For the purposes of this section, the term "extraordinary" is used in a broad sense to represent the separate yet related concepts of *qi* 奇, *guai* 怪, and *yi* 異, which share a focus on that which lies beyond the mundane.

[48] Li Yu, *Rou putuan* j.1, p.3b.
[49] Ibid., p.4a.

The attraction of the extraordinary is well-documented by early theorists, even as they disapproved of its effects. Wang Chong believed that "the people of the world like the extraordinary and strange, and those past and present share the same feeling" 世好奇怪，古今同情,[50] hinting that such attraction is a fundamental part of human nature. He subsequently develops this line of argument in a more overt manner:

> It is the nature of the common people of the world to be attracted to extraordinary and strange words, and to tell fabricated [written] tales. Why? True events cannot please the mind, but decorated inventions can startle the ear and move the heart. It is for this reason that among talented people, those who enjoy talking and discussion embellish true events to create sumptuous words; those who use pen and ink manufacture empty writings and create fabricated records. Listeners take them as genuine, and cannot bear to stop telling them; readers take them to be true matters, and they are passed on without cease.
>
> 世俗之性，好奇怪之語，說虛妄之文。何則？實事不能快意，而華虛驚耳動心也。是故才能之士，好談論者，增益實事，爲美盛之語；用筆墨者，造生空文，爲虛妄之傳。聽者以爲真然，說而不舍；覽者以爲實事，傳而不絕。[51]

[50] Wang Chong, "Qiguai pian di shiwu" 奇怪篇第十五, *Lun heng* j.3, p.154.
[51] Wang Chong, "Duizuo pian di bashisi" 對作篇第八十四, *Lun heng* j.29, p.1170-1171.

While Wang Chong is clearly primarily concerned by the distorting effect that these inventions may have on serious history, his argument vividly illuminates the entertainment value possessed by the extraordinary across both written and oral traditions. It also demonstrates that from early times on, people deliberately made texts more extraordinary in order to satisfy a demand for entertainment.

Liu Xie, writing several centuries after Wang Chong, echoes his concerns from a similarly orthodox standpoint:

> But the common people all love the extraordinary, and pay no heed to concrete principles. In passing on tales, they wish to make the feats grander; in recording the distant past, they wish to recount exploits in detail. Therefore, what is usual is discarded and what is different is adopted; far-fetched tales are brought up, and [they boast] "My book records what is not found in the old histories". This is the ultimate source of errors, and a giant maggot eating away at descriptions of the distant past.
>
> 然俗皆愛奇，莫顧實理。傳聞而欲偉其事，錄遠而欲詳其跡，於是棄同即異，穿鑿旁說，舊史所無，我書則傳，此訛濫之本源，而述遠之巨蠹也。[52]

[52] Liu Xie, "Shizhuan di shiliu" 史傳第十六, *Wenxin diaolong* j.4, p.207.

Liu's argument again illustrates the strength of the demand to make history more "unusual" and novel, and thus more entertaining; in short, more fictional. Significantly, both Liu and Wang associate the love of the extraordinary with the "common" 俗 in their rhetoric, making a distinction between the worthy and refined pursuit of accurate history and the less elevated goal of entertainment; the implication being that serious scholars should be above such things.

While Wang Chong and Liu Xie were cognizant yet suspicious of the entertaining power of the extraordinary, others had a more inquiring attitude. This can be seen in Guo Pu's 郭璞 (276- 324 CE) introduction to the *Shanhai jing*. An ancient text of unclear origins that was "probably an ancient shamanic book" 蓋古之巫書也,[53] though later read as entertainment and regarded as fiction,[54] it describes fantastical creatures and locations. Guo, however, denied that these were "unusual" 異:

> Of the people of the world who read *Shanhai jing*, none fail to puzzle at its broad-ranging invention and exaggeration, its many strange and fantastical words. I try to debate with them by saying that, as Zhuangzi said, "What people know is nothing compared to what they do not

[53] Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe*, p.18.
[54] Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365-427) wrote a series of poems describing his enjoyment of the work. Later, in the Qing dynasty, the text was called "the ancestor of fiction" 小說之祖. See Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, "Du *Shanhai jing*: qiyi" 讀《山海經》·其一, *Tao Jingjie ji* 陶靖節集 j.4, p.45; Yong Rong 永瑢 et.al., "Zibu shier: xiaoshuojia lei" 子補·小說家類, *Siku quanshu jianming mulu* 四庫全書簡明目錄 j.14, p.551.

know"; I have seen this in *Shanhai jing*…The people of the world do not know why what they call unusual is unusual; neither do the people of the world know why what they term "not-unusual" is not unusual. What do I mean by this? Objects are not unusual in themselves; they are made unusual by me. The unusual is to be found in me: it is not that objects are unusual. Therefore, the people of the barbarian northwest see cloth and are puzzled by flax; the people of the southern region of Yue see a blanket and are amazed by wool.

世之覽《山海經》者，皆以其閎誕迂誇，多奇怪俶儻之言，莫不疑焉。嘗試論之曰，莊生有云：「人之所知，莫若其所不知。」吾於《山海經》見之矣……世之所謂異，未知其所以異；世之所謂不異，未知其所以不異。何者？物不自異，待我而後異，異果在我，非物異也。故胡人見布而疑賡，越人見罽而駭毳。[55]

Guo's sophisticated argument positions the extraordinary as a subjective reception phenomenon rather than an objective feature. While this argument is used to support the possibility that the beasts and locations described in the *Shanhai jing* are real, it also opens up space for the idea that the extraordinary can be also found in more mundane things, depending on the experience and attitudes of the reader. It is no accident, therefore, that Ling's argument in the preface of *Pai'an jingqi* closely

[55] Guo Pu 郭璞, "*Shanhai jing* xu" 《山海經》敘, *Shanhai jing* 山海經, p.478.

mirrors Guo's in its description of foreigners marvelling at something thought commonplace in China.

The Six Dynasties era in which Guo Pu marked the beginning of a period stretching to the Song in which "there was a great profusion of fiction with the word 'unusual' in the title" 六朝唐宋，凡小說以「異」名者甚眾,[56] reflecting the entertaining power of the unfamiliar. This period saw the flourishing of the *zhiguai* 志怪 (records of anomalies) genre, which fetishised the unusual. While this genre foregrounded the extraordinary in the supernatural, its counterpart, the *zhiren* 志人 (records of people) genre of which *Shishuo xinyu* is part, used depictions of the talent or eccentricity of a human subject to entertain the reader. This interest in the extraordinary in the human world is also seen in Tang dynasty *chuanqi* such as Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779-831) *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳 (The Tale of Yingying), in which the importance of the tale's power to astonish is stressed. The text claims that "of Zhang's friends, those who heard of this [the affair with Yingying] were all amazed" 張之友聞之者，莫不聳異之.[57] Yuan Zhen also describes relating the incident at gatherings of friends,[58] demonstrating that the extraordinary could also entertain through sparking a desire to retell a story.

[56] Hu Yinglin, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* j.36, p.476.
[57] Yuan Zhen 元稹, *Yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳, p.259.
[58] Ibid.

The parallel tradition of searching for the extraordinary in the supernatural, however, continued unabated. The Song dynasty literatus Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) collected huge volumes of strange tales for an eager audience. Hong made no secret of his love for the extraordinary, as is made clear in his preface to *Yijian bing zhi* 夷堅丙志 (Records of the Listener C):

> When I started collating *Records of the Listener*, I was wholly concerned with collecting the unusual and venerating the strange; I had no intention to describe human matters and mention people's crimes.
>
> 始予萃《夷堅》一書，顓以鳩異崇怪，本無意纂述人事及稱人之惡也[59]

This statement overtly proclaims Hong's lack of desire to effect change in the human world; his focus is solely on the extraordinary. This focus is reflected in his other surviving prefaces, including his earlier boast that "all the strange and extraordinary things under Heaven are collected here" [i.e. *Yijian jia zhi* 夷堅甲志 (Records of the Listener A)] 天下之怪怪奇奇盡萃于是矣.[60] The same preface also betrays Hong's pride at the (largely unauthorised) multiple editions of his work printed in locations across the country, showing the enduring popularity enjoyed by tales of the

[59] Hong Mai, "*Yijian bingzhi* xu" 《夷堅丙志》序, *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, p.363.
[60] Hong Mai, "*Yijian yizhi* xu" 《夷堅乙志》序, *Yijian zhi*, p.185.

extraordinary.[61] The influence of Hong's collections lasted long after his own times, and is visible in the number of tales from *Yijian zhi* adapted for inclusion in *Erpai*.

The entertaining power of the extraordinary continued to be explored in the Ming dynasty. Early *huaben* stories such as "Nianyu Guanyin" 碾玉觀音 (The Jade Guanyin) and "Xishan yiku gui" 西山一窟鬼 (A Cave of Ghosts in the Western Hills) both involve men marrying ghostly wives. These stories were edited and included in the *Sanyan* collections, where they joined a host of other stories dealing with the extraordinary and supernatural. Mischievous fox spirits jostle for space alongside long-dead ghostly women and fanciful tales of powerful Daoist priests in Feng's works, which showcase a full range of otherworldly phenomena in addition to the stories on more quotidian topics. While Feng did not explore what the extraordinary meant for him in his prefaces in the same way that Ling did, the editorial decisions taken in gathering together such a broad range of stories dealing with the supernatural shows that *huaben* fiction, like literary language fiction, was drawn towards the entertaining possibilities of the extraordinary. The extraordinary also attracted writers in the closely related genre of drama: Ni Zhuo 倪倬 (n.d., late Ming) claimed of *chuanqi* drama that "all things extraordinary are passed on, and all

[61] Ibid.

things passed on are extraordinary" 無奇不傳，無傳不奇.[62] Tang Xianzu was another devotee, venerating the "strange and extraordinary, which cannot be captured in words" 怪怪奇奇，莫可名狀.[63]

In fact, the late Ming period was characterised by a general obsession with the extraordinary, one which extended beyond literature to permeate all areas of life. For example, the diarist Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-1679) dwells on the extraordinary effects created by the use of piled stone features in the Yu 于 garden, demonstrating that *qi* was also a guiding aesthetic of literati garden design in this period.[64] Even clothing was touched by the obsession with the extraordinary, something lamented by the conservative official Li Le 李樂 (1532-1618): "All the vigorous scholars and men of scholarly families wear women's clothes of red and purple, to say nothing for the moment of draping underwear over their outerwear" 凡生員讀書人家有力者，盡為婦人紅紫之服，外披內衣姑不論也.[65] The trend for novel clothing is also reflected in *Erpai*, with story II-39 describing how the young men of Suzhou had taken to swaggering around in newly fashionable "hundred column hats" 百柱帽.[66] *Erpai*'s

[62] Ni Zhuo 倪倬, "Xiaoyin" 小引, *Erqi yuan* 二奇緣, in *Guben xiqu congkan* 古本戲曲叢刊, series 3 no.10, p.1a.
[63] Tang Xianzu, "*Heqi* xu" 《合奇》序, *Tang Xianzu quanji* v.2, p.1138.
[64] Zhang Dai 張岱, "Yu yuan" 于園, *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶 j.5, p.42.
[65] Li Le 李樂, *Jianwen zaji* 見聞雜紀 j.10, p.19a, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* v.1171, p.717.
[66] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.654.

focus on the extraordinary, evident in the titles of the collections, shows them to be a product both of this wider contemporary trend and a long literary tradition.

Ling Mengchu and the extraordinary

Despite his stories emerging from contemporary fashion and long tradition, Ling had quite individual views on how the extraordinary should be defined and embodied. For him as for Guo Pu, the extraordinary was a subjective phenomenon, dependent on the experiences of the beholder. However, Ling develops this concept further to claim that anything can be extraordinary and deny any causal link between the supernatural and the extraordinary, arguing that8 "the saying that one must go beyond the range of one's eye's and ears to search for the weird and bizarre in order to create the extraordinary is superfluous" 所謂必向耳目之外，索詭譎幻怪以為奇，贅矣.[67] This belief is borne out in the preponderance of stories that focus on quotidian subjects.

However, this rejection of a causal link between the supernatural and the extraordinary by no means translates into a complete absence of the supernatural in the works; the supernatural might be "superfluous", but it is not always so. The presence of ghosts and spirits helps to improve the entertainment value of the stories,

[67] Ling Mengchu, "Xu", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.

while also facilitating the predestination and retribution that underpin the moral universe of the stories. *Erpai* contains multiple arguments for the existence of ghosts, most persuasively in the introduction to story II-13:

> In Jin times there lived a Ruan Xiu, whose *zi* was Xuanzi. All his life he did not believe in ghosts, and he wrote a work entitled *There Are No Ghosts* especially. He said, "The people today who have seen ghosts mostly say that the ghost wears the same clothes as when they were alive. If this is the case, then if people turn into ghosts after death, clothes also have ghosts." One day, a student came to visit him, and they entered into a heated debate on ghosts and spirits…Xuanzi was a nimble debater, and the student seemed unable to persuade him. He stood up and said, "Good sir, you do not believe, and it is difficult for me to defend my position. But there is a major piece of evidence right in front of our eyes. I myself am a ghost: how can you say ghosts do not exist?" On saying this, he suddenly disappeared...It has always been that most sages say that people turn into ghosts when they die: where is the logic in ghosts not existing?
>
> 晉時有個阮脩，表字宣子。他一生不信有鬼，特做一篇《無鬼論》。他說道:「今人見鬼者，多說他着活時節衣服。這等說起來，人死有鬼，衣服也有鬼了。」一日，有個書生來拜他，極論鬼神之事……宣子口才便捷，書生看看說不過了，立起身來道:「君

家不信，難以置辯，只眼前有一件大證見，身即是鬼，豈可說無耶?」言畢，忽然不見…… 從來聖賢多說人死為鬼，豈有沒有的道理?[68]

Though Ling did not write this anecdote, combining it from two sources,[69] he did make a conscious editorial choice to include it in his collection and a conscious authorial choice in having the storyteller support the existence of ghosts using the ventriloquistic techniques common to other discursive passages.[70] While Ling certainly had an ambivalent attitude towards the supernatural, evident not only in his prefaces but also reflected in his drama criticism[71] and several comments in which he admits bafflement at the motivations of ghosts,[72] he had no problem with it in moderation and when it is "close at hand and credible" 切近可信.[73]

[68] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.224.
[69] Fang Xuanling et.al., "Ruan Ji fu" 阮籍附, "Liezhuan di shijiu" 列傳第十九, *Jin shu* j.49, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.808-809.
[70] See Chapter Three, p.201.
[71] Ling Mengchu, "Tan qu zazha", *Nanyin san lai, LMCQJ* v.4., p.4; see also Chapter One, p.75.
[72] For example, comments such as these, from II-13 and II-30 respectively. In both cases, Ling is unsure of the motivation of the ghost: "I don't understand this. It could be that [the ghost] is playing with him because he is so cocky about his own courage, or it could be that the ghost wants to force him down the mountain to tell of the matter?" 此卻無解，或因其自恃有膽而戲之，或亦迫其下山白事乎?; "If she just wanted to get [the child] adopted, then why does it have to be in Xiangtan? I cannot understand this and other points. How is this what is known as 'destiny should be like this'?" 只欲寄養，何必湘潭？如此等處，皆不可解。豈所謂夙緣宜然耶?. Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.229; Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.502.
[73] Ling Mengchu, "Fanli", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.2.

This rejection of more "unbelievable" supernatural elements also has the effect of improving the entertainment value of the stories. Ling's stance on the issue suggests that he had independently come to a similar conclusion as Henry Fielding, that

> every Writer may be permitted to deal as much in the Wonderful as he pleases; nay, *if he thus keeps within the Rules of Credibility*, the more he can surprize the reader, the more he will engage his Attention, and the more he will charm him.[74] [emphasis added]

In other words, the effect of the "wonderful" on the reader is contingent on the reader's willingness to believe what is being written; without it, the work is made less entertaining.

The intermittent supernatural elements in the work help to highlight the fact that Ling drew on a range of previous traditions of the extraordinary. Stories such as II-13 and I-24 concern the supernatural; a large number, including I-6 and II-25, centre around unusual crimes or criminal cases; others, such as the introduction to II-27 and I-28, show the influence of the *zhiren* tradition in that they focus on extraordinary individuals; still others, for example II-27 and I-5, depict extraordinary and twisting love affairs. More still combine several "extraordinary" features in one: II-30 and 37

[74] Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, Book VIII, Chapter I "Containing above two Days", p.406.

tell of love affairs involving ghosts, while I-14 and II-16 tell of supernatural agency solving an unusual criminal case.

These stories show that *Erpai*'s entertainment value flows from a synthesis of multiple pre-existing traditions. While the stories in *Erpai* are linked to the traditions of humorous and extraordinary fiction through their source materials and the previous works in the *huaben* genre, Ling also exaggerates characteristic features of these traditions, such as contemporary relevance, humour, a judicious seasoning of the supernatural, extraordinary people, and unusual love affairs, in order to better entertain his audience.

Critical views on entertainment in vernacular fiction

The greater part of contemporary scholarship on early vernacular fiction mirrors the trend for pre-modern thinkers to concentrate on aspects of literature other than entertainment in that, while the entertainment function is not overlooked, the focus of the works is on unearthing the less-evident moral, philosophical, and political aspects embedded in the texts. This is the case in works such as Plaks' *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu Ta Ch'i-shu* and Hegel's *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, both discussed in the previous chapter.[75] Idema's *Chinese Vernacular Fiction:*

[75] See p.182.

The Formative Period also does not give prominence to entertainment in its analysis of *Qingping shantang huaben* and the *Sanyan* collections. However, the ability and desire to read for leisure is regarded as a limiting factor on the potential readership of vernacular fiction,[76] showing that he sees entertainment as one of the fundamental functions of the genre. Yang Shuhui, meanwhile, concentrates on Feng Menglong's strategy of elevating the *Sanyan* stories "to a higher level of literary sophistication".[77]

A notable exception to this pattern, also cited in the previous chapter, is Timothy Wong's article "Entertainment as Art: An Approach to the Ku-Chin Hsiao-Shuo". While this thesis disagrees with his conclusion that didacticism is unimportant in the stories, it supports Wong's focus on the important role that entertainment plays and his argument that "it would be a mistake to consider all fiction written with the entertainment motive inferior"[78] to works with grander ambitions. Wong has argued elsewhere that, as a whole, fiction in pre-modern China was a genre characterised by its entertainment value rather than any exploration or dissemination of "truth".[79]

Feng Baoshan, meanwhile, acknowledges entertainment as a key function of *Erpai*, though he rates it as less important than a concern for realism. Furthermore, Feng

[76] Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period*, p.LII.
[77] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.153.
[78] Wong, "Entertainment as Art: An Approach to the Ku-Chin Hsiao-Shuo", p.247.
[79] Wong, "The Xiaoshuo Tradition and Modern Entertainment Fiction".

Baoshan divides the entertainment function into self-entertainment (*ziyu* 自娛) and entertaining others (*yuren* 娛人), with the former taking precedence over the latter.[80] For Feng Baoshan, the aspect of entertaining others was led by the commercial context of the work's publication, while the self-entertainment has a utilitarian aspect, arising from Ling's satisfaction at expressing his political ideals through the stories.[81] This is in contrast to the position taken in this thesis, that the entertainment and edification of the readers were the equally weighted key functions of *Erpai*.

Ma Meixin also stresses the importance of entertainment, arguing that while Ling believed didacticism was important, entertainment was more important to him.[82] In addition, Ma holds that emphasizing the entertaining nature of the work was a way for Ling to meet the reading tastes of the urban classes, though he also cites literati who read fiction for enjoyment.[83] Similarly, Zhang Bing interprets the existence of entertaining features such as simplification of plot development and the dramatic rendering of conflicts as a result of Ling catering to the aesthetic needs of the urban classes.[84] This idea is also developed by Li Guikui, who, as described in Chapter Two,[85] interprets *Erpai* as being primarily a product of Ling catering to the often low

[80] Feng Baoshan, *Ling Mengchu*, p.34.
[81] Ibid., p.36.
[82] Ma Meixin, *Ling Mengchu he Erpai*, p.26.
[83] Ibid., p.27-29.
[84] Zhang Bing, *Ling Mengchu yu Liangpai*, p.91.
[85] See p.111.

tastes of his urban class readership, incorporating features that oppose Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, are close to their daily lives, and which interest and entertain them in order to ensure market success.[86]

A common thread evident in these and other works, connected to the idea that the readership of the stories was the urban classes, is the more or less exclusive association of these urban classes with the "lighter" and more entertaining aspects of the stories, while the scholar-gentry class are by implication linked with didacticism and "seriousness". This idea is by no means a modern one: there are clear parallels with the way in which Liu Xie and Wang Chong associated the quest for the extraordinary with the "common". However, the literati storytelling gatherings described above and the literati praise for entertaining fiction noted in section one of this chapter show that this was not necessarily the case: literati too needed light entertainment. Given the conclusion of Chapter Two, which suggests a relatively well-educated and wealthy audience, this thesis instead takes the position that the stories were entertainment for this demographic.

A further area of scholarship relevant to entertainment in *Erpai* examines how the works present the concept of the "extraordinary", here narrowly corresponding to the

[86] Li Guikui, "Lun *Erpai* chuangzuo de shichang jingji yishi", pp.54-56.

Chinese character *qi* 奇, rather than in the broader sense in which it is used in the section above. As already discussed in Chapter One, Ji Dejun's article "'Pai'an' heyi 'jingqi'?: *Erpai* chuanqi yishu lun" describes some ways that Ling creates *qi* in his stories: selection of materials, explicit emphasis of how extraordinary the story is, insertion of supernatural elements, focus on extraordinary people, and skilful use of coincidences.[87] However, he does not always take full account of the influence of Ling's sources, which account for many of these features. Fu Chengzhou's article on Ling's views on *qi* also makes similar points about selection of materials and plot development, also pointing out that the works present ideas that can be considered *qi*.[88] He also examines Ling's belief that *qi* can be found in everyday life, suggesting that this shows the influence of Li Zhi's philosophy.[89]

Textual roles and entertainment

The analysis of the use of textual roles to privilege the functional effect of entertainment in the stories is structured in three parts, based around Ling's three major roles in the text as defined in Chapter One:[90] writer, commentator, and storyteller. It examines how each textual role is used to privilege entertainment in the

[87] Ji Dejun, "'Pai'an' heyi 'jingqi'?: *Erpai* chuanqi yishu lun".
[88] Fu Chengzhou, "Ling Mengchu de shangqiguan yu *Erpai* zhi qi". See also section "Entertainment in Didacticism" above, p.241.
[89] Ibid., p.22.
[90] See p.10.

stories, with reference to the entertaining features identified above. Though the most prominent entertaining feature in *Erpai* is "the extraordinary", the majority of Ling's actions in his textual roles are aimed at making the text more entertaining through the addition of humorous and erotic elements. In contrast, the vast majority of the "extraordinary" features in the stories are inherited from the source materials, and thus do not originate from Ling.

Writer

First, Ling's actions in his role as writer, determining the content and plot of the story, will be examined. As noted in Chapter One,[91] on occasions Ling made very few changes to his source texts, while in other cases the changes were more drastic. This section will compare the stories in *Erpai* with the sources identified by Tan Zhengbi in order to demonstrate that the role of the writer is consistently used to make the finished work more entertaining.

The first story to be analysed is the main story of I-17. This centres on a beautiful young lady named Wu 吳. She is left a widow before she is 30, and has one child. She visits a Daoist temple to arrange for the abbot to perform rites to release her husband's soul from suffering. The abbot in this temple is the lustful Huang Miaoxiu

[91] See p.59.

黃妙脩. Wu and Huang flirt with each other during the rites, exchanging glances while the scriptures are read. These flirtations continue until they consummate their affair during a séance with the spirit of Wu's husband. The two of them decide to tell others they are cousins so that they can continue to meet after the rites are over. Their affair continues for several years. However, as Wu's son Liu Dasheng 劉達生 grows older, he gradually starts to suspect, and tries to disrupt their affair through a series of pranks. Eventually, Wu and Huang tire of his mischief and hatch a scheme to get rid of him by accusing him of being unfilial and having the court sentence him to death. However, the magistrate sees through their plan when he hears Liu Dasheng's willingness to accede to his mother's desire to punish him. He pretends to sentence Liu to death and asks Wu to provide a coffin, while having a guard follow her. The guard sees her ask Huang to arrange the coffin, and the magistrate's suspicions are confirmed. The next day in court, Huang is arrested while delivering the coffin and confesses under torture. He is beaten until he is almost dead and then nailed into the coffin while still alive. Wu is also sentenced to death, but Liu Dasheng pleads for clemency. She dies of illness brought on by longing for Huang and the shock of the court case not long after.

The three source tales for this story, meanwhile, are far simpler. The first is recorded in the Tang collection *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載 (Stories of Government and the

People),[92] and is told centred on the magistrate Li Jie 李傑. It narrates the facts of the court case and does not describe the affair that leads up to it. It also differs from the *Erpai* version in several key details: the Daoist (unnamed in this story) is beaten to death instead of being nailed in the coffin alive, and the woman (also unnamed) is also beaten to death at the same time. The second version is found in *Sui-Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話 (Illustrious Tales of the Sui and Tang dynasties), and is materially identical to the first, with some minor differences in phrasing. The third, from the Song collection *Lüchuang xinhua* 綠窗新話 (New Tales from the Green Window), is more detailed. In contrast to the first two, the protagonists are named and it is told from Wu's point of view. It also includes a brief account of the flirtation between Wu and Huang, noting that "during the recitations, he [Huang] repeatedly inserted implied meanings to flirt with her" 每於聲音間，寓詞挑之.[93] It also notes the fact that Liu Dasheng attempts to put a stop to their affair, though does not specify how. The magistrate in this story is named Wang 王, in contrast to the first two sources. A further difference is that in this version Huang is "severely punished according to law" 重治道士於法,[94] while Wu's fate goes unmentioned. A fourth source is found

[92] The same text is also seen in *Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語 (New Tales of the Great Tang), *Taiping guangji*, *Guoshi zuan yi* 國史纂異 (A Compilation of the Unusual in National History), *Zheyu guijian* 折獄龜鑑 (Mirror of Judgements), and is summarised in *Zhinang bu* 智囊補 (A Supplement to the Pouch of Wisdom). See Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.662.
[93] Huangdu fengyue zhuren 皇都風月主人, *Lüchuang xinhua* 綠窗新話 j.1, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.662.
[94] Ibid., p.663.

in the Song work *Tangyin bishi* 棠陰比事 (Comparing Cases Under the Pear Tree), and is largely identical to the first two sources listed above, though the woman's fate is not mentioned.[95]

As the magistrate in *Erpai* was named Li Jie, and the first two sources do not name the abbot or the widow, it is evident that the *Erpai* story is based on more than one of these sources. His additions to the story reveal his priorities in adaptation. First of all, the account of Wu and Huang's sexual affair is vastly elaborated from the sources in a manner that goes beyond the demands of adaptation into the vernacular. For example, in the description of Wu and Huang's first flirtation the sexual tension between them as they exchange surreptitious glances is described in lavish detail: Wu smells the scent on Huang's clothes, and they kneel down barely half a foot apart from each other, desperate to embrace. That night, Wu is described lying in bed that night, her desires aroused by her meeting with Huang and the thought of him having sex with his disciples in the outer quarters of the house. She dreams that Huang comes and starts making love to her with his "cucumberous penis" 黃瓜般的玉莖,[96] before one of his handsome disciples arrives and joins in a threesome. She orgasms as she wakes up, the bed soaking wet, while the commentator dryly observes, "This

[95] Gui Wanrong 桂萬榮, "Li Jie mai guan" 李傑買棺, *Tangyin bishi* 棠陰比事 j.1, p.12a-b.
[96] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.248.

dream will come true later" 此夢後來應驗.[97] The insertion of the dream, which is not key to the plot, shows a clear decision in the role of writer to titillate the readers with erotic description, while the comical description of Huang's penis reveals an attempt to entertain through humour.

The decision to introduce two extra characters into the story, the handsome disciples Taiqing 太清 and Taisu 太素, also shows an interest in increasing the erotic elements of the story. Their function in the plot is almost purely sexual: Huang has sex with Taiqing as a way of letting out his pent-up sexual desire over meeting Wu; after this, Taiqing and Taisu masturbate to release their own sexual desire; the next night, Taisu (at that point unnamed) appears in Wu's erotic dream. Several years on from this dream, and after one attempt at lovemaking is interrupted, Taisu plays a central role in the erotic climax of the story. First, Wu takes his virginity in secret while Huang is outside the house waiting to be let in. When Huang finally comes in, he and Wu plot to accuse her son of being unfilial. Huang pledges that once Liu is out of the way Wu will never have to sleep alone again, suggesting threesomes or foursomes that include the two disciples. Wu and Huang then have sex before her and Taisu sleep together for the second time that evening under Huang's watchful gaze, in the realization of her dream. This evening of sexual encounters marks the beginning of the end of their

[97] Ibid.

affair: the next day, Liu Dasheng is taken to court and their scheme is exposed. The way in which this erotic climax also functions as the turning point in the plot also underlines the moral message of the story, with excess sexual abandon bringing disaster on Huang and Wu.

Increased eroticism is not the only way that the role of the writer is used to make this story more entertaining; humour is also a key part of the tale. The erotic climax of the story described above also contains elements of farcical humour, in the way that Wu and Taisu sneak a chance to have furtive sex behind Huang's back only to do it again in full view of him. The various ways that Liu torments Huang and his mother are related with relish, as the lovers are outwitted at nearly every turn. First, he locks his mother out of the bedroom she shares with him while she is meeting Huang in another room, feigning surprise when he finds her crouched outside the door in the morning. This causes her to move into a separate room; however, the next time Huang comes to visit he locks the couple in and places a barrel of urine and a tub of faeces underneath the window. At daybreak, events unfold just as Liu expected, and Huang jumps out of the window to escape, covering himself in excrement. Later, Liu waits until Huang is sneaking in and then bangs the gong to alert the neighbours to a thief. Huang tries to escape, and Liu pelts him with stones as he limps out, leaving a shoe behind. The slapstick flavour of these added episodes, and the gleeful

descriptions of the ways in which Huang and Wu are outwitted and humiliated time after time,[98] help to make the story more entertaining through the humour they provide.

The final significant change is in the outcome of the court case. The version in *Erpai*, in which Huang is nailed into the coffin while still alive, is far more unusual and dramatic than the versions related in the sources. This makes the story more entertaining through rendering it more "extraordinary". However, this change, and the other entertaining additions described above, are not made at the expense of the story's didactic purpose: the exaggerated version of Huang's death underlines the grisly fate awaiting immoral fornicators. Furthermore, the *Erpai* version of the ending, in which Liu Dasheng pleads for clemency for his mother only for her to die soon after, is an innovation designed to protect Liu Dasheng's image of flawless filial conduct while still allowing Wu to be punished for her moral transgressions. The disciples are also punished: they are banished from the Daoist priesthood for being too handsome and liable to lead other young women astray. Karmic retribution later catches up with Taisu, who had sex with Wu and thus dies of longing for her, while Taiqing, who did not, is redeemed and leads a quiet and blameless life.

[98] See "storyteller" section below for a closer analysis.

The use of the writer role to make the stories more entertaining is also seen in story I-31. The main story tells of a mid-Ming peasant rebellion led by Tang Sai'er 唐賽兒. Tang was a historical personage living relatively close to Ling's time, and the sources identified by Tan Zhengbi all tell a broadly similar story. In basic outline, these tell that Tang Sai'er, the wife of one Lin the Third 林三 from a village in Shandong, amassed a large number of followers and broke into revolt. They took a string of cities before being put down, though Tang escaped capture. Some details differ: a commonly repeated episode is that Tang found a stone chest containing a supernatural military book and a precious sword near her dead husband's grave.[99] The accounts also differ in their description of Tang's escape. One tells of how the Emperor summoned all Buddhist and Daoist nuns in Shandong to the capital in an unsuccessful attempt to catch her, and also admits the possibility that she may have received divine assistance.[100] Another says that she was captured and almost executed, but the blade would not pierce her neck. She was then thrown in jail and heavily shackled, but her chains dropped off and she disappeared.[101]

The version in *Erpai*, meanwhile, differs radically from the historical records listed above, so much so that the late Qing *jinshi* Ping Buqing 平步青 (1832-1896)

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[99] Shen Defu 沈德符, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 j.29; Zhu Yunming 祝允明, *Jiuchao yeji* 九朝野記 j.2, both cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.719-720.
[100] Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian* j.29, cited from ibid., p.719.
[101] Zhu Yunming, *Jiuchao yeji* j.2, cited from ibid., p.719-720.

described it as "absurd ramblings" 無稽之詞.[102] Modern scholars such as Hu Shiying and Luo Chenglie 駱承烈 have also attacked what they see as a "reactionary" and ahistorical character assassination of someone they regard as a proletarian hero.[103] In *Erpai*, Tang Sai'er is born after her mother has a strange dream. She marries local man Wang Yuanchun 王元椿, who is killed after turning to banditry when they run out of money. By his grave, she finds a precious sword, a helmet, and a mysterious book. She then meets the Daoist He Zhengyin 何正寅, who schools her in Daoist arts including the animation of paper soldiers and horses. Their affair becomes known to a bunch of local layabouts, and they alert the authorities in the hope of making money from the ensuing criminal case. Tang Sai'er and He Zhengyin kill the guards sent to arrest them and sweep down on the county seat of Laiyang 萊陽. That night, they build on their momentum and carry on to the prefectural seat of Qingzhou 青州, taking it after using a ruse to gain entrance. The officials Zhou Xiong 周雄 and Commander Dai 戴指揮 in charge of nearby Teng County 藤縣 and its coastal defences see that the situation is hopeless and fake their surrender. Tang rewards her supporters and takes the beautiful young man Xiao Shao 蕭韶 as a lover. After six months, she has He Zhengyin killed for abusing his power to rape the women of the county in his charge. When court troops finally arrive, Tang defeats them with ease,

[102] Ping Buqing 平步青, *Xiawai junxie* 霞外攟屑 j.9, cited from ibid., p.722. Ping mentions the compilation *Xu jingu qiguan*, which incorporates this story from *Pai'an jingqi*.
[103] See Hu Shiying, *Huaben xiaoshuo gailun*, p.589-590; Luo Chenglie 駱承烈, "Ming chu fan Kong nü yingxiong Tang Sai'er" 明初反孔女英雄唐賽兒, p.90.

and the commander realises that he must use a stratagem to defeat her. The loyalists hidden in her camp recruit Xiao Shao, and get Tang Sai'er drunk on Mid-Autumn Festival before Xiao Shao kills her in her bed. Government forces camped outside sweep into Qingzhou, before rapidly proceeding to Laiyang that same evening and retaking the town after using a trick to gain entrance into the walls, ending the rebellion.

The plot as told in *Erpai* shows clear evidence of being fictionalised, displaying a neater narrative parallelism than the historical record. Tang takes Laiyang first, then Qingzhou, before losing them again in reverse order. Even the circumstances surrounding the capture and recapture are similar: Tang seizes Laiyang by catching the authorities off guard, before rushing to Qingzhou that evening to capitalise on her success, gaining entry through pretending to be government soldiers; later, Qingzhou is captured while Tang is off her guard, and the government troops enter Laiyang under the pretence that they are rebels. In addition to making the plot more structurally pleasing, the writer's alterations also act to make the story more entertaining through introducing eroticism and humour.

The characters of He Zhengyin and Xiao Shao are new in the *Erpai* version of the story. These act as Tang Sai'er's main foils and sexual partners, introducing eroticism

into what would otherwise be a military-political plot. The two men have parallel and opposite significance: He Zhengyin is portrayed as an incorrigible lecher who first engineers a meeting with Tang Sai'er in order to sleep with her, and who is later undone by his unfettered sexual desire; he is instrumental in the initiation of the rebellion. Xiao Shao, on the other hand, is an upright and loyal character who is not swayed by Tang's sexual charms: he is the means by which Tang's rebellion is put down. Ling also uses the affairs to highlight Tang's unusual (for that period) proactivity in initiating sexual affairs. With He Zhengyin, she goes to her room, strips off, and lies on the bed while leaving the door open as an invitation. When He Zhengyin then follows her in and uses a more euphemistic approach, saying "This humble Daoist deserves death for daring to encroach on the queen of the flowers! Take pity on my humble self!" 小道該死，冒犯花魁。可憐見小道則個！, she scolds him for his timidity and tells him to get on with it.[104] Later, she picks Xiao Shao out as one of the spoils of war, taking him for herself just as she rewards her lieutenants with beautiful concubines.[105] The depictions of Tang's erotic interactions with the two men also have a humorous edge to them. Before consummating his affair with Tang, He Zhengyin attempts to arouse her with a cunning trick: leading the dinner guests into the courtyard to admire the bright moon, he pretends to relieve himself in such a way that Tang Sai'er can admire his extremely large penis in the

[104] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.490-491
[105] Ibid., p.499.

moonlight.[106] Xiao Shao's character also combines the erotic and the humorous towards the end of the story, when before murdering her he turns up the light and starts having sex with her to check that she really is passed out drunk.[107] As in I-17, however, the role of the writer acts to balance the moral scales. The deaths of He Zhengyin and Tang Sai'er are directly associated with their sexual activity, while Xiao Shao, who redeemed himself through his key role in putting the rebellion down and who in any case did not have much of a choice about his relationship with Tang, survived. Meanwhile, the titillating details about Tang Sai'er's sexual forwardness also serve to delegitimise her by implicitly highlighting her similarities to the demon women of popular legend.

The *Erpai* version of the story also contains a lengthy humorous digression, describing the gang of layabouts attempting to catch Tang and He in their affair in order to make themselves some money. Having burst into Tang's house, they cannot find either of the lovers due to a Daoist art of concealment, and the scene degenerates into farce. First, they attack a Mrs Qian 錢氏, the wife of one of their gang, thinking that she is Tang Sai'er. Then, as one climbs a ladder to search the attic, the invisible He Zhengyin batters him with a cudgel. The hapless Mrs Qian is then slapped across the face while she searches the bedroom, getting a black eye and a bleeding nose for

[106] Ibid., p.490.
[107] Ibid., p.506.

her pains. Having seen He Zhengyin have his fun, Tang Sai'er then gets in on the act. The layabouts decide to raid the kitchen for some food, slaughtering a chicken, putting some rice on to boil, and getting two earthen jars of rice wine out. While invisible, Tang extinguishes the stove fire so the chicken is left half cooked, mixes chicken shit and ash in with the rice, and pours the contents of a chamber pot into the wine before sitting back to laugh at the intruders. Finally, the layabouts retreat to safety, though Mrs Qian suffers the final indignity of being mistaken again for Tang Sai'er by the crowd assembled outside, who lob bricks at her. The humour in this scene echoes the farcical nature of Liu Dasheng's efforts to prevent his mother's affair seen in story I-17, while the length of this incidental episode (over 2000 characters in a story of 17,000 characters) shows the importance of humour in the stories.

In addition to the two stories examined above, there are countless other minor instances of Ling using his role as writer to make his stories more entertaining through added eroticism and humour. For example, in II-13, Ling adds the detail that a character's death was caused by his wife's insatiable sexual appetite;[108] similarly,

[108] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.233; Hong Mai, "Sheng xian shan'an" 嵊縣山庵, *Yijian zhi bu* 夷堅志補 j.16 and Hong Mai, "Zhengguo si xiye" 證果寺習業, *Yijian zhi ding* 夷堅支丁 j.6, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.810-811.

II-7 also contains added detail about a female character's insatiable sexual appetite;[109] lesbian sex is added to the erotic events in II-34;[110] and in I-35, the skinflint main character is mocked with his prideful insistence on referring to himself as the tautological "Rich Man Elderly Jia, Esquire" 財主賈老員外.[111] Ling systematically uses his role as writer of the text to make his stories more entertaining through the addition of erotic and humorous elements.

Storyteller

This section examines Ling's use of the storyteller role to make the stories more entertaining. This is focused on the style of narration, and includes the verse interspersed throughout the stories at key points. The main tactics used in this role are to add humour, eroticism, and suspense to the story, and the primary methods by which he accomplishes this are through descriptions, similes and verse. In addition, the use of the storyteller's manner improves the entertainment value of the story by linking the text to the leisure context of a professional storytelling session.

[109] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.123; Hong Mai, "Dong Hanzhou sunnü" 董漢州孫女, *Yijian zhiwu* j.9, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.786.
[110] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.558; Hong Mai, "Yang Jian guanke" 楊戩管客, *Yijian zhiyi* 夷堅支乙 j.5, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.869.
[111] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.572.

The first example comes from story II-10. In this, the rich old man Mo 莫 falls for one of his maids, who bears him an illegitimate son. The son is furtively passed on to another family, but his paternity is common knowledge and when Mo dies a gang of layabouts attempt to stir up a lawsuit in order to make some money. However, they are foiled by Mo's clever elder son. At the beginning of the sexual relationship between Mo and the maid, the storyteller recites this song mocking old men who still have affairs:

> *An old man who still hasn't changed his lecherous ways, he sees a young girl and pesters her constantly, how could he know that it's really awkward to do anything? You stroke his cheeks and they're nothing but wrinkles; you kiss him and it's all white whiskers; and right at the important moment, he's soft soft soft soft soft.* {That spoils the fun}
>
> 老人家再不把淫心改變，見了後生家只管歪纏，怎知道行事多不便？搵腮是皺面頰；做嘴是白鬚鬍；正到那要緊關頭也，卻又軟軟軟軟軟。【殺風景】[112]

This unrefined ditty, characteristic of the storyteller role, allows extra humour to be injected into the scene. The contrast between the romantic actions of stroking and kissing and the old man's wrinkles and whiskers heightens the absurdity of the

[112] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.178.

situation, while the final line with its bold repetition of the character *ruan* 軟 serves to bring the song to a humorous close, tailing off in a way that mirrors the unsuccessful end of the lovemaking. The reader can almost "hear" a humorous performance of the song, the storyteller petering out over the last line. The commentator role also gets in on the act, as will be analysed in the next section.

Another example of parallel prose being used in this way can be found in II-25. This story tells of a lustful good-for-nothing named Xu Da 徐達, who works as a master of ceremonies for weddings. He falls for one bride he officiates for, named Ruizhu 蕊珠, and abducts her on her wedding night, dumping her in a dry well from which she is abducted by someone else and spirited away until an unlikely coincidence reunites her with her family. The storyteller paints a farcical picture of the wedding scene:

> Xu Da watched until it felt like his whole body was on fire, and who knows how many times he whacked one off in secret. He couldn't get her out of his mind. When he found out she was being wed to the Xie family, he worked out a way to go to the Xie household and act as the master of ceremonies on the auspicious day…when the bride stepped out of the sedan chair and began to perform the rites, Xu Da didn't have enough eyes to look with, and his heart was locked on the bride. The words turned to gobbledegook in his mouth, and he got the rites all fuddled and muddled. Picture the scene:

East and West [host and guest] are misrecognised; [the order of] left and right are jumbled up. He addresses people wildly; the father of the bride suddenly becomes the mother of the bride. His heart is not in the congratulations; when one should "bow" he turns it into one should "rise". After the ritual meeting with the father of the bride, now he asks the bride's father to receive a bow. After greeting the parents, he asks the mother and father to ascend the hall. He doesn't care about driving the groom to distraction with his noise; he is only greedy to stare at the bride.

徐達看得渾身似火，背地裡手銃也不知放了幾遭，心裏掉不下。曉得嫁去謝家，就設法到謝家包做了吉日的茶酒……比至新人出轎，行起禮來，徐達沒眼看得，一心只在新娘子身上。口裡哩嗹囉嗹，把禮數多七顛八倒起來。但見：

東西錯認，左右亂行。信口稱呼，親翁忽為親媽；無心贊喝，該拜反做該興。見過泰山，又請岳翁受禮；參完堂上，還叫父母升廳。不管嘈壞郎君，只是貪看新婦。[113]

The folksy persona of the storyteller is used to exaggerate Xu's obsession with Ruizhu, using colloquial language to describe Xu's furious masturbation and witless staring with great comic effect. The parallel prose segment heightens this effect, underlining the way that Xu's desire has turned the solemnity of a marriage ceremony

[113] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.427.

into farce. Both this and the previous parallel prose segment analysed above are, strictly speaking, unneccesary as far as plot and characterization are concerned; the sole reason for their inclusion is to make the stories more entertaining.

The next example also centres on the vein of slapstick humour which runs through *Erpai*, being the episode mentioned above from I-18 in which Liu Dasheng tricks Huang Miaoxiu into jumping into a bucket of faeces. The addition of the episode shows how the desire to craft an entertaining story was manifested through Ling's role as writer; an analysis of the way in which the episode is related shows how he is equally adept at using his role as storyteller to make his stories funny. As in the example above, the commentator role is also involved:

> The abbot peered through his two bleary eyes and walked over to the window, opened it, and leapt down. All you heard was a clonk as his right foot landed right in the piss bucket. His left foot couldn't take the weight, he got light-headed and heavy-footed, and then he stepped in the shit tub. He hurriedly lifted up his right foot to get away, but the piss bucket was deep and he was panicking, and so he knocked the piss bucket on its side. {The brilliance of this scene is boundless.} He tripped over, and piss and shit covered half his body, with some getting smeared on his lips too <I wonder if he tasted any?>. However, he didn't dare raise a fuss, and ran away fast, swallowing his pain and holding his nose.

知觀朦朧着兩眼，走來開了窗，撲的跳下來。只聽得撲通一響，一隻右腳早踹在尿桶裏了。這一隻左腳做不得力，頭輕腳重，又躥在屎缸裏。忙抽起右腳待走，尿桶却深，那時着了慌，連尿桶拌倒了。【此景佳無限。】一交跌去，尿屎污了半身，嘴唇也磕綻了<不知曾嘗些否？>，却不敢聲高，忍着痛，侮着鼻，急急走去。[114]

The use of the storyteller's manner here allows a very detailed description of each of Huang's physical movements. This creates an almost cinematic effect and paints for the reader a vivid mental picture of what is happening, encouraging them to revel in Huang's humiliation. The detailed descriptions of physical movements also have the effect of lengthening and exaggerating the episode, maximising its entertaining value. As in the example above, the simulation of an oral storytelling context amplifies the entertainment value of the passage both indirectly, through evoking this leisure activity, and directly, by enabling the use of lively, oral language.

A similar example of the ability of the storyteller to give detailed physical descriptions being used to make the story more entertaining is found in the introductory story to II-12. In this story, Zhu Xi is outwitted by a poor man who buries a fake gravestone on a rich man's prime grave plot and then accuses the rich

[114] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.254.

man of stealing it from him. Zhu Xi uncovers the fake gravestone and assigns the plot to the poor man thanks to his bias against rich people. The moment when the fake gravestone is dug up is described in this way:

> When the loose dirt was swept away and they looked, it was a bluish stone, with faint writing on it. Huiweng [Zhu Xi] ordered it to be taken over and examined. His servants brushed off the earth, washed it with water, and then the writing became visible: four large characters saying "The tomb of X", with smaller characters inscribed on one side. They were all the names of the poor man's ancestors.

> 撥開浮泥看去，乃是一塊青石頭，上面依稀有字。晦翁叫取起來看。從人拂去泥沙，將水洗淨,字文見將出來，却是「某氏之墓」四個大字。旁邊刻着細行，多是小民家裏祖先名字。[115]

The storyteller role here describes the process of unearthing the "gravestone" in minute detail, with every action described in order to lengthen the time between the stone being dug up and the writing being revealed. This builds the suspense as the reader is kept waiting to find out what the stone is, what the writing says, and whose tomb it belongs to. A fundamental storytelling technique, the suspense relies on the

[115] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.212.

use of casual, spoken language and the concurrent simulation of an oral storytelling context this implies. This example shows another way in which the characteristics of the storyteller role are used to make the stories more engaging and entertaining.

Another way that the storyteller role is deployed is the use of humorous similes and descriptions, including set phrases seen in previous works of vernacular fiction and Ling's own original creations. For example, when the aforementioned Xu Da first sees Ruizhu as he does her hair in preparation for the wedding, his "body was like a snow lion facing the fire, getting softer before your eyes; 'it' was like a storm petrel eating chalcedony, getting harder before your eyes." 身子如雪獅子向火，看看軟起來。那話兒如吃石髓的海燕，看看硬起來.[116] While the unusual image of the chalcedony-eating storm petrel is only seen once, others are used repeatedly. One such example, also found regularly in *Shuihu zhuan* and other vernacular fiction, is "open up the eight bones of the skull and pour a bucket of icy water in" 分開八片頂陽骨，傾下一桶雪水來, used to emphasise a character's sense of shock.[117] Another favourite is variations on the set phrase "stuck his/her tongue out and could not draw it back in again for some time" 伸了舌頭出來，一時縮不進去,[118] also used to describe extreme shock or amazement. Both these phrases also help to heighten

[116] Ibid., p.427.
[117] For examples, see Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.235; Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.410, 472, 549.
[118] For examples, see Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.19, 332; Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.230, 262, 468, 557, 596.

suspense, as they are invariably used before the reader learns the reason for the shock. Other examples include the vividly exaggerated "At this point, even if she cut off her tongue and sewed up her lips it wouldn't make a blind bit of difference" 此時便把舌頭剪了下來,嘴唇縫了攏去，也沒一毫用處,[119] and the wryly humorous, "even to start off with, Elder Sister Mo was not a woman who could have had her chastity celebrated with a memorial gate" 莫大姐原是立不得貞節牌坊的.[120] Though these examples seem minor when taken individually, the cumulative effect of these asides is to give the stories a greater feeling of humour, making them more entertaining.

The simulacrum of oral performance enabled by the role of the storyteller can be used in a very direct way to make the stories more entertaining for the reader, by using the "storyteller's manner" to overtly emphasise how enjoyable the tale is. In narratology, this is termed an "evaluation device", a "part of the narrative which reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units".[121] These evaluation devices act to highlight the "point" of the story and maintain the interest of the audience. The bridge between the introductory story and the main story is a common place to find such emphasis. Examples include:

[119] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.331.
[120] Ibid., p.633.
[121] Labov and Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience", p.37.

Now, I am going to tell of a matter that happened in Song times. This also involves close relations cheating each other who in the end received clear retribution, and also includes many unusual and strange events. This will be our main story.

小子如今說著宋朝時節一件事，也為至親相騙，後來報得分明，還有好些稀奇古怪的事，做一回正話。[122]

from II-20 and

Because I have been desperately trying to urge the people of the world not to gamble, I have thought of another person. He had nothing to do and was wandering about at leisure when he fell in to the hands of some good-for-nothings. They spirited him off to gamble without him realising, and he lost it all and couldn't do anything about it. Telling [his story] is funny and enjoyable.

小子只為苦口勸着世人，休要賭博，却想起一個人來，沒事閒遊，撞在光棍手裏，不知不覺弄去一賭，賭得精光，沒些巴鼻。說得來好笑好聽。[123]

[122] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.356.
[123] Ibid., p.140.

from II-8. These interludes underline the centrality of entertainment to the stories by promoting and highlighting their entertainment value in an attempt to keep the readers interested. The second example also shows how the entertainment and didactic functions of the collections merge, with the storyteller's didactic "urging" leading him to tell a "funny and enjoyable" tale; while this section is focused on the consistent actions of the storyteller in making the stories more entertaining, the storyteller persona is also intimately involved in the transmission of the didactic message of the stories.

Commentator

The third and final of the textual roles to be examined is that of the commentator, or the reactions to the events decided upon by the writer and narrated by the storyteller. As seen in the previous chapter, ventriloquism through the commentator and simulated interactions between commentator and storyteller are used to put across a didactic message. In these instances, an air of detached authority is cultivated, making the commentator role appear as an impartial onlooker and thus lending weight to his interventions in the didactic argument. However, the commentator persona has a lighter side to his character as well, and is frequently put to use to make the stories more entertaining. In common with the other two roles in the text, the primary means by which this is accomplished is a blend of humour and eroticism.

The commentator often makes tangential lewd comments on the story, even when the plot itself is not at that point erotic. For example, the main story in I-27 begins with Cui Junchen 崔俊臣 and his wife Mrs Wang 王夫人 being attacked by river pirates. While Cui is pushed overboard and the rest of the crew killed, Mrs Wang is kept unharmed as the bandit chief wants to marry her to his son. He assures her that she will be well looked after as she is part of the family now. At this point the commentator interjects, saying "If she encountered an 'old ash crawler' [father who lusts after his son's wife], how could she be spared?" 若遇着扒灰老，如何能免.[124] This interjection adds a bawdy and humorous element to the drama of the kidnapping. Another example is found in the main story of II-37. This tells of a failed Huizhou merchant, Cheng Zai 程宰, who is left stranded and penniless in the north of the country. He meets a female spirit, and they have a sexual relationship. The spirit also advises him on what goods to buy, and he soon makes a fortune. After the spirit leaves him, she reappears in the clouds:

> Every fine hair was visible on her upper body; her lower body was covered by the shimmering sunset light, and could not be discerned clearly. {It's her lower body that's more important}

[124] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.420.

上半身毫髮分明，下半身霞光擁蔽，不可細辨。【下半身更要緊】[125]

Again, the commentator steps in to contribute sexual innuendo and humour to the scene. The way in which the storyteller's description is phrased makes it at least plausible that it was written in order for the commentator to have an opportunity to insert this innuendo. One final example of this type of comment comes from the main story of II-18. A Daoist alchemist is instructing Zhen Tingzhao 甄廷詔 in sexual techniques and the use of a powerful aphrodisiac. At this point, the commentator butts in, saying "It would be marvellous if he got a woman in as well and taught him the way face to face" 再得一女子，當面教道為妙.[126] While in this example eroticism is already strongly implied by the plot, the commentator role's position outside the text enables a further ribald quip.

The commentator also frequently encourages characters to have sex (as long as the particular story is not warning against the evils of fornication). An episode in story II-35 involves a young man who thinks he sees his beloved go to the outside toilet in the night, and bursts in expecting a romantic assignation; it turns out to be her stern

[125] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.620. The text of this edition contains a typo in this location: 發 instead of the correct 髮. See Ling Mengchu, *Erke pai'an jingqi*, in *Guben xiaoshuo congkan* series 14, p.1821.
[126] Ibid., p.326.

mother. At this point, the commentator remarks, “she should just play along with the mistake” 也該將錯就錯,[127] i.e., she should sleep with the young man. The introductory story to II-17 tells of a young scholar Zhang 張 who is invited in to tea by a woman he meets near a peach blossom bower. The woman, who claims she is a widow, flirts with him, but Zhang remains strictly within the bounds of propriety. The commentator takes issue with this moral rectitude, complaining, “She is in widowhood, and yet she feels able to serve tea and wine. He has to be a real sour piece of work to stay so buttoned up” 孀居而可茶可酒矣，尚何拘束為真酸物耳.[128] Comments such as these, with their risqué flavour, contribute to the light-hearted and enjoyable mood of the text. They are also by their nature completely incidental to characterization and plot, demonstrating that the only reason they have been included is for their entertainment value.

The commentator’s contribution is not confined to sexual innuendo. As seen in the example cited above in which Huang Miaoxiu falls into the bucket of shit, his comments can also bring out the slapstick humour in other contexts as well. In addition, the commentator on occasion shows a more laconic and sarcastic wit, in contrast to the somewhat crude sexual humour seen thus far. For example, in I-11, one of the characters berates a *xiucai* for their rudeness, saying that as they have

[127] Ibid., p.581.
[128] Ibid., p.295.

studied the Classics, they should conduct themselves better. The commentator jumps in with a sarcastic rhetorical question, "Does it follow that those who study the Classics have good conduct?" 讀詩書者遂有行止乎？.[129] This sarcastic side is also seen in I-22, where he exclaims "What a great Director of the Bureau of Honours!" 好個主爵 in response to the appearance of a particularly corrupt official.[130]

Like the storyteller, the commentator also explicitly highlights entertaining parts of the stories. When in I-31 the layabouts trying to catch Tang Sai'er and He Zhengyin attack Mrs Qian by mistake, the commentator notes, "The misidentification is funny" 錯認可為笑資.[131] Soon after, as the farce develops, he notes "This alone is enough pleasure [for Tang and He]; why think of revolt?" 只如此足樂矣，何為思亂?,[132] thus highlighting the pleasurable nature of the scene for the reader in a humorous way. The commentator also takes pains to overtly stress the extraordinary nature of the characters and plots,[133] and the standard exclamations of "Marvellous!" 妙 and "Diverting!" 趣, seen throughout the Chinese fiction commentary tradition,[134] are liberally sprinkled throughout the text at key points.

[129] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.199.
[130] Ibid., p.346.
[131] Ibid., p.493.
[132] Ibid.
[133] For an example, see ibid., p.35.
[134] For examples, see ibid., p.109; Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.77.

The function of the commentator role in adding entertainment to the stories (as distinct from the function of the role in underlining the didactic message) can be viewed as a result of the influence of the literati amateur storytelling tradition. The ribald interjections and hypothetical elaborations on the plot ("if she encountered a father who lusts after his son's wife…", "she should play along with the mistake", "it would be marvellous if he got another woman in and taught him the way face to face" etc.) form a written replication of the raucous banter that one might find at a drunken storytelling session. The presence of the commentator makes the experience of reading the text more akin to witnessing a social conversation, albeit one conducted wholly by Ling himself. This feature in turn helps to reinforce the entertainment value of the stories through the conscious simulation of a leisure activity, presumably one enjoyed by many of his highly educated target audience.

Didacticism in entertainment

Just as the didactic passages of the stories contain entertaining elements, there are also uses of textual roles that serve to entertain while simultaneously enhancing a story's didactic message: an example of this is the dramatic way in which Huang Miaoxiu is punished for his crimes. This punishment of "bad" characters and the final success of "good" characters has obvious significance in *Erpai*'s "encouragement and warning" model of didacticism, while also being an important factor in increasing

enjoyment of the works. Modern entertainment and communication theorists interpret the mechanics of this enjoyment in terms of "affective disposition", or an audience member's affinity with a character in the story:

> If we assume that affective dispositions are formed more positively for one side in a conflict over the other…then it is apparent that our enjoyment of the situation will be bound to our appraisal of the conflict's resolution. The more we favor the side that comes out on top, the more we enjoy the situation. The less we favor the side that succeeds, the less we enjoy the situation.[135]

It is clear that Ling recognised this psychological mechanism instinctively as part of his craft as a writer. For example, the bridge section introducing the main story of II-16 reads:

> You can see that the authorities in the netherworld understand all the injustices in the human world. But in this matter, although the retribution in the netherworld was clear, *the money owed in the human world was not seen to be returned in the end, so it was not greatly pleasing*. Now, I will tell of a story in which money was gained fraudulently in the human

[135] Raney, "Disposition-Based Theories of Enjoyment", p.81.

world, the netherworld issued a judgement on the case, and the property was returned in the human world; *it is more enjoyable than the one I have just told*.

可見陽世間有冤枉，陰司事再沒有不明白的。只是這一件事，陰報雖然明白，陽世間欠的錢鈔，到底不曾顯還得，未為大暢。而今說一件陽間賴了，陰間斷了，仍舊陽間還了，比這事說來好聽。[136] [emphasis added]

The storyteller's assessment of the introductory story makes it clear that the enjoyability of the story is directly linked to the resolution of its main conflict, in this story a court case involving fraud. Similarly, the storyteller promises that the main story will be more enjoyable as it features a more complete resolution of the conflict. At the same time as being more enjoyable, a more satisfying resolution also makes the moral lesson of the story clearer, by punishing the evildoer and providing the innocent victim with restorative justice. Another example comes from the section bridging the introduction and main stories in I-6:

Now, there's another decent woman who was caught by a nun's vicious scheme. She wasn't willing to let it lie and made a plan with her husband, getting the nun killed without anywhere to bury her body: *it is really enjoyable*, and something scarcely heard or seen.

[136] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.282.

而今還有一個正經的婦人，中了尼姑毒計，到底不甘，與夫同心合計，弄得尼姑死無葬身之地，果是快心，罕聞罕見。[137] [emphasis added]

Again, the storyteller links the enjoyment of the story to the satisfaction gained from the resolution of the narrative conflict it contains; in this situation, it is the "decent woman's" triumph over the evil nun that provides the gratification.

This particular story is also a good illustration of how Ling's skilful application of the workings of drama ensure that the aims of both entertainment and didacticism are achieved. Before the plot of the story is examined, the theoretical background to the mechanisms of suspenseful drama will be briefly introduced. Modern theorists hold that these mechanisms consist of:

(1) creating positive and negative dispositions toward characters by engaging them in a conflict; (2) credibly and repeatedly endangering the liked characters for a long time, placing them under high probability of suffering harms or losses (creating fears but not destroying hope through the spectator's certainty of harm or loss); (3) putting the disliked characters in a position of undeserved advantage, gain, and unlikely punishment (creating retaliatory

[137] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.86.

> dispositions with the audience); and (4) finishing with a surprising but strongly desired happy ending (the liked characters win and/or the disliked lose). The higher the arousal build-up through skilful excitation transfer, the higher the enjoyment of the final resolution.[138]

"Excitation transfer" refers to the process by which residual excitation from a previous stimulation is added to and amplifies the excitation experienced as a result of a subsequent stimulation, no matter its "hedonic valence", or whether the excitation is positive or negative. This means that the excitation generated by something negative happening to the hero of a story enhances the excitation felt when something positive happens to them later; the more extreme the first negative event is and the more excitation this produces, the greater the enjoyment is when the positive conclusion finally arrives.

The plot of I-6 (there is no known source for the story) follows the above pattern almost exactly. First, the main protagonists are introduced: Lady Wu 巫氏, the "decent woman" mentioned above; Bu Liang 卜良 (No Good), a lustful ruffian; Nun Zhao 趙尼姑, a morally degenerate woman who has a sexual relationship with Bu Liang; and Scholar Jia 賈秀才, Lady Wu's husband. Then, strong positive and negative dispositions towards each of them are formed, with Jia and Wu painted as

[138] Bryant and Miron, "Excitation-Transfer Theory", p.49.

being the ideal couple of a talented scholar and virtuous wife. Bu, as his name suggests, is described as a lecherous good for nothing, and the nunnery that Zhao runs is shown to be not much different to a brothel.

One day when Jia is away, Zhao visits Wu, and as the weather is good Wu happens to peer out of her door curtain. She is spied by Bu Liang, and later that evening Bu and Zhao hatch a plot to entice Wu to sleep with him. Wu is invited over to the nunnery, and Zhao keeps her hungry, eventually feeding her a rice cake laced with alcohol and powerful herbs. As she is not used to alcoholic drinks, she passes out soon after. This stage of the plot corresponds to stage 2 in the schema above: as the reader is aware of Bu and Zhao's evil plan but Wu is not, the audience realises she is in great danger.

Once she is passed out, Bu rapes her in a backroom in the nunnery. It is notable here that Ling does not resort to parallel prose in this scene, as he is wont to do with romantic sex, using instead precise descriptions of physical actions in order to baldly underline the horror of the scene. She comes to with a vague realization that something is amiss, and rushes home in shame. This corresponds to stage 3 in the plot: Bu and Zhao's scheme has worked, and the humiliation involved in reporting them to the authorities means punishment is unlikely. In desperation, Wu prays before a tapestry of Guanyin she made. This causes Jia to have a dream about Wu in which

the figure of Guanyin is also present, and he returns home early. Wu tells him what has happened, and he comes up with a scheme. Wu pretends to arrange a tryst with Bu, and when they kiss she bites the tip of his tongue off and carries it away. Then, Jia goes to the nunnery and murders Zhao and her disciple, placing Bu's tongue in her mouth. The bodies are discovered the next day, and the officials put out a search for a man with a missing tongue. Bu is soon arrested for rape and murder. He cannot speak to defend himself, and the official decides to beat him to death without the need for a confession. This is the last stage in the plot, corresponding to the surprising yet desired ending: the villains have all been punished, and Wu's honour remains intact as the details of the rape were not revealed.

While this careful plot structuring ensures that the story is highly entertaining and displays Ling's skill as a fiction writer, it also makes the didactic messages of the story more effective. There are two identifiable messages. The first is general and implicit, an encouragement of virtue and warning against evil: it is Wu and Jia's goodness and piety, underlined during the process of creating positive affective dispositions towards them, which moves Guanyin to intercede and help them take their revenge. Meanwhile, the circumstances of Bu's punishment, in which he cannot speak to defend himself, parallels Wu's predicament at being unable to report her rape due to the social humiliation this would entail. He is also caught unawares by a

trick, just as Wu was. The unlikeliness of the eventual punishment, a key part of the creation of an entertaining plot, also serves to underline the inevitability of karmic retribution for evil acts. The second message is specific and explicit, as it is the one highlighted by the ventriloquistic pairing of the commentator and storyteller and targeted at part of the story's likely audience. This warns women against casually striking up relationships with nuns: Wu's fate, the horror of which is key to the excitation transfer and enjoyment felt at the final conclusion of the story, is held up as a grim example of the possible consequences of this.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the skill with which Ling uses his three textual roles to privilege the collections' entertainment value. The way in which all three textual roles are consistently used to make the stories more entertaining through increasing their humorous and erotic content wherever possible illustrates the overriding importance of entertaining effect. This privileging of entertainment value reflects Ling's reimagining of the vernacular short story as defined by Feng Menglong, into a genre primarily characterised by functional effect, while also appealing to audiences in a commercial book market.

Erpai draws inspiration and influence from the non-elite professional and literati amateur storytelling traditions, which despite their differences are both centred on entertainment: features from both traditions are adopted in order to maximise the entertainment value of the collections. The two traditions are reflected in the text in the personas of the simulated storyteller and the commentator respectively. The presence of these personas mean that the stories are constantly reaching beyond the text to refer to an external social context, enhancing the entertainment value of the story in the process. The character of the simulated storyteller helps to evoke the leisure context of a marketplace storytelling session, while the folksy style of speaking that comes with the character enables the use of vivid and colourful imagery, bawdy songs, and exaggerated slapstick humour. The vernacular language also allows for more suspense to be incorporated into the narrative.

The amateur storytelling tradition, meanwhile, is represented by the commentator persona. While this textual role is also used for making serious didactic points, the effect when used for entertainment is to simulate the context of an amateur storytelling session. The commentator's often smutty interjections and witty remarks in response to the plot events narrated by the storyteller help to replicate something of the social experience of oral amateur storytelling for an individual reader. In addition

to this, the commentator role is used in a more conventional way to explicitly highlight the entertaining parts of the text and bring them to the reader's attention.

Meanwhile, the role of the writer is used to alter or exaggerate the source materials to maximise their entertainment value. In stories such as I-17, I-31, and I-6, which show major differences with their source materials, or have no known source, Ling's gifts as an entertaining writer are made evident. The clean parallel structure of the plotline in I-31, and the instinctive knowledge of the requirements of suspenseful narrative and excitation transfer displayed in I-6, do much to render these stories more entertaining. However, the vast majority of the alterations to the source materials are aimed at making the completed story more humorous, erotic, or both. This demonstrates that entertainment was one of Ling's primary considerations in the process of adapting source materials into the vernacular.

The nature of the entertaining features of *Erpai* also hint at Ling's overriding concern with the functional effect of the collections. The extraordinary features of the stories come in the main from Ling's choice of sources. The storyteller and commentator roles, (and indeed the titles of the collections) explicitly highlight these features, but the role of the writer is only deployed to make the plot events more extraordinary on rare occasions. This could be interpreted as a reluctance to exaggerate the

extraordinary elements in the stories for fear that such exaggeration would actually detract from the entertaining effect of the stories: Ling recognised that the extraordinary was more effective when it was credible.

The other two main entertaining features of the collections, humour and eroticism, also hint at Ling's concern for functional effect. The humour in the works is generally either ribald or slapstick, and rarely aims at greater sophistication. This recourse to lowest common denominator humour suggests that Ling was anxious to make sure that his audience would laugh at the stories. Similarly, the liberal addition of erotic scenes and innuendos unnecessary in terms of plot and characterization demonstrates that he was willing to push the boundaries of propriety in order to titillate and entertain an audience hungry for erotic fiction. Nevertheless, he sets a bottom line and keeps to it, never going so far as to become a "criminal to decency", as his refusal to use obscene vocabulary in descriptions of sex shows.[139]

Despite this preoccupation with enhancing the entertainment value of the collections, Ling ensures that his focus on entertainment does not compromise the didactic purpose of the stories. Not only does he keep strictly to his minimum moral standards in his addition of eroticism and bawdy humour, the very features that make the stories

[139] Hu, Lenny, "Introduction", *In the Inner Quarters: Erotic Stories from Ling Mengchu's Two Slaps*, p.47.

entertaining often contribute to the effectiveness of their didactic message, evident in his intuitive understanding of the principles underlying affective disposition theory. As shown in the previous chapter,[140] humour is often deployed to mock characters that are held up as bad moral examples, and the increased eroticism is somewhat balanced out by a corresponding focus on divine retribution for illicit sex. Just as the didacticism of *Erpai* is entertaining, the entertainment often expresses a didactic message.

[140] See p.241.

Chapter Five: Reimagining the Vernacular Story

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CHAPTER 5

Erpai **and the reimagining of the vernacular story**

The previous two chapters have demonstrated the way in which Ling Mengchu took advantage of the textual roles afforded him by the *huaben*'s generic features in order to privilege *Erpai*'s entertainment value and didactic effect. This chapter will compare *Erpai* with the works that served as Ling Mengchu's inspiration, the *Sanyan* collections, in order to assess the extent to which the use of these differing roles and their privileging of functional effect illustrates a reimagining of the genre as defined by Feng Menglong.

Gujin xiaoshuo, *Jingshi tongyan*, and *Xingshi hengyan*, the three volumes that make up the *Sanyan* collections, were published in 1620, 1624, and 1627 respectively. They were created by the prolific writer and dramatist Feng Menglong. Like Ling Mengchu, Feng Menglong hailed from the prosperous Jiangnan region, living in Suzhou, on the opposite side of Lake Tai to Ling's Shengshe home. In addition to their similar geographical background and taste for vernacular fiction, the two men also shared interests in drama, wine, and beautiful women.[1] Their careers, too, followed a similar path, with Feng gaining a succession of minor posts through the tributary scholar system after enduring many decades of failure in the examination system. Furthermore, out of all his varied activities it is vernacular fiction that

[1] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.80-81.

remains Feng's most enduring achievement, just as with Ling. The *Sanyan* collections were enormously influential, inspiring not only the creation of *Erpai*, but remaining the defining works of the *huaben* genre to this day.

Feng's view of *huaben* fiction

The prefaces to the three collections offer an insight into how Feng saw *huaben* fiction, and his key concerns in the genre. Reflecting the didactic slant to the titles of the collections, all three prefaces stress the didactic potential of vernacular fiction. However, there is more to this emphasis on didacticism than a straightforward affirmation of utilitarian literary values. The argument in all three prefaces hinges on the presumed ability of vernacular fiction to reach all areas of society, including illiterate country dwellers. This being the case, it is likely that the heavy emphasis on a broad-ranging didactic effect has a second, unstated purpose: to underline the "folk authenticity" of the genre. For Feng Menglong, a man fascinated with "genuine" non-elite genres such as folk songs in contrast to the "false" verse and prose of his time,[2] "the vernacular story's most important aspect was its folk origin".[3] The claim of folk

[2] Feng Menglong, "Xu *Shan'ge*" 敘《山歌》, *Feng Menglong quanji* 馮夢龍全集 v.18, p.1.
[3] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.41.

origin lent stories the "legitimating aura of general sentiment",[4] in the eyes of Feng and other like-minded literati.

Another major concern that is made evident through the prefaces is the justification of *huaben* fiction as a literary genre. In the preface to *Gujin xiaoshuo*, Feng accomplishes this in two ways. Firstly, based on his exaggerated claims of the stories' didactic effect, he credits them with having a "greater educational and moral power" than the *Xiao jing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety) and *Lun yu*.[5] The result of this is to rank the vernacular story with the most orthodox, prestigious writing in Chinese literary history. At the same time, Feng Menglong also invokes the established idea that each dynasty could be represented by a literary form which captured the spirit of the era to argue that in the Ming dynasty, the genre with the most literary vitality is the vernacular story: the *huaben* story is cast as the natural successor to the respected *chuanqi* tales of the Tang.[6] Finally, Feng reminds the reader that "the eater of peaches need not discard the apricot" 食桃者不費杏:[7] in other words, vernacular fiction is perfectly acceptable reading matter even for aficionados of literary language works. These varied rhetorical strategies reveal that Feng was greatly concerned with

[4] Ibid.
[5] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.647; Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.30.
[6] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646; Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.30.
[7] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646.

promoting and proving the literary quality of *huaben* fiction. This argument formed part of his overall strategy of elevating the genre into one that was fit to rank alongside the great works of the past, and even surpass them through its authenticity.

Claimed and disclaimed authorship in *Sanyan* and *Erpai*

The prominence Feng gave to the supposed folk origin of his stories partially masks his complex involvement in the genesis of the *Sanyan* collections. His role, and his conception of his role, differs from Ling's equivalent role in *Erpai* in a number of key respects. First of all, while *Erpai* is wholly the work of Ling Mengchu, *Sanyan* comprises stories from a range of sources: some, such as GJ-30 and JS-38, are altered versions of vernacular stories found in Hong Pian's *Liushijia xiaoshuo*; others, such as GJ-1 and GJ-22, are based on existing source materials in the manner of *Erpai*; and others, including over half of the final collection *Xingshi hengyan*, are thought to be the work of one of Feng's collaborators.[8] Inevitably, this results in a broad range of styles in stories from different authors. Despite the differing provenances of the stories that make up the collections, Yang Shuhui and Pi-ching Hsu have argued that Feng's undisputed position as the chief editor of the texts means that he had the final say in what they contained; therefore even the stories not written by Feng have been

[8] While Hanan emphasises that the precise identity of this collaborator is not proven, he suggests it could be Langxian 浪仙, the author of the collection *Shi dian tou* 石點頭 (The Rocks Nod Their Heads). Ibid., p.104; p.230 note 5.

edited to conform to one overarching aesthetic.[9] In any case, this chapter focuses on comparing the techniques of didacticism and entertainment used in *Erpai* to those found in *Sanyan*; whether it was Feng or one of his collaborators who deployed them is not central to the issue.

The authorship question is further complicated by Feng's refusal to explicitly acknowledge the extent of his involvement, seeming "to want his readers to believe that…he has done nothing more than collect these stories and make them available to the public".[10] This is accomplished by presenting the collections from behind a bewildering mass of pseudonyms; for example, in the preface to *Gujin xiaoshuo*, one of Feng's pseudonyms relates a fabricated encounter with a "Maoyuan yeshi" 茂苑野史 (Unofficial Historiographer of Maoyuan),[11] another of Feng's pseudonyms and the supposed source of the tales. A similar fabricated encounter between different pseudonyms is described in the preface to *Jingshi tongyan*.[12]

The commentary authorship is subject to the same deliberate obfuscation as the authorship of the stories. Though in *Gujin xiaoshuo* one figure, "Lütianguan zhuren" 綠天館主人 (Master of the Green Sky Studio), is credited with both "commenting"

[9] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.15 note 1.
[10] Ibid., p.32.
[11] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646.
[12] Yuzhang wu'ai jushi, "*Jingshi tongyan* xu", in Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.664.

and "ordering" the stories 評次,[13] in *Jingshi tongyan* and *Xingshi hengyan* the commentary is credited to "Keyi zhuren" 可一主人 (Master Capable of Oneness) and "Keyi jushi" 可一居士 (Hermit Capable of Oneness, while the collation is credited to "Wu'ai jushi" 無礙居士 (No Obstacles Hermit) and "Molang zhuren" 墨浪主人 (Ink-Wild Master) respectively.[14] Despite this array of pseudonyms, contemporary scholar Hu Wanchuan's 胡萬川 careful comparison of the *Sanyan* commentaries with commentary known to be added by Feng to other versions of the same stories has demonstrated conclusively that Feng Menglong was the editor, commentator, and preface writer to all three of the collections.[15] Ling's own preface to *Pai'an jingqi*, which states that Feng Menglong edited the collections,[16] makes it clear that Feng's contemporaries could see through these pretences.

The elaborate nest of pen names used by Feng form a sharp contrast to Ling's works. The name "Jikongguan zhuren", a known pseudonym of Ling's (the pseudonyms used by Feng are more obscure),[17] is explicitly and repeatedly associated with the authorship and the commentary of the stories. This is not the only way in which

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[13] Feng Menglong, "Mulu" 目錄, *GJXS*, p.1.
[14] Feng Menglong, "Mulu" 目錄, *JSTY*, p.1; "Muci" 目次, *XSHY*, p.1.
[15] Hu Wanchuan 胡萬川, "*Sanyan* xu ji meipi de zuozhe wenti" 《三言》的敘及眉批的作者問題, *Huaben yu caizi-jiaren xiaoshuo zhi yanjiu* 話本與才子佳人小說之研究, p.138.
[16] Ling Mengchu, "Xu", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.
[17] Hu Wanchuan, "*Sanyan* xu ji meipi de zuozhe wenti", *Huaben yu caizi-jiaren xiaoshuo zhi yanjiu*, p.123.

Ling's authorial role was foregrounded, as is seen in the opening sentences of An Shaoyun's publisher's note:

> Jikongguan zhuren had a "stack of stones" [preoccupations] in his chest, and thus required a barrel of wine with which to "sprinkle them" [relieve them]; often, a small taste of his stomach's "fragrant fatty meat" [literary talent] would reveal itself. Seeing that fiction was popular across the world, he picked up his writing brush and, exercising unique and novel creativity, collected strange tales and elaborated them to bring himself pleasure.
>
> 即空觀主人，胸中磊塊，故須斗酒之澆；腹底芳腴，時露一臠之味。見舉世盛行小說，遂寸管獨發新裁，摭拾奇衷，演敷快暢。[18]

This note places the author at the centre of the works, focusing on his self-expression, literary talents, and, significantly, his creative role in writing the works. By contrast, the publisher's notes for the *Sanyan* stories focus on the stories themselves and not the figure of the author: the note for *Gujin xiaoshuo* emphasises the collection's entertainment value, while the one for *Jingshi tongyan* emphasises its moral qualities.[19]

[18] An Shaoyun, in Ling Mengchu, *Pai'an jingqi*, *Guben xiaoshuo congkan*, series 13 v.1, p.1.
[19] Feng Menglong, *GJZS*, p.645; *JSTY*, p.662.

The first preface to *Erke*, written by the unknown Shuixiang jushi, also elevates the figure of the author, claiming that "Jikongguan zhuren is extraordinary in character, writing, and experience" 即空觀主人者，其人奇，其文奇，其遇亦奇 before going on to praise his "great yet unappreciated talent" 抑塞磊落之才.[20] In contrast, the prefaces to the *Sanyan* collections refrain from discussing the supposed source of the stories in favour of discussing the merits of the stories themselves.

The huge difference between Feng's disavowal of authorship and Ling's robust assertion of it is symptomatic of a wider divergence in approach to the vernacular story. Feng Menglong's desire to lend greater authority to the stories through presenting them as having a genuine popular origin necessitated his effacement as author. Moreover, as a pioneer in the genre, this illusion of popular origin helped to justify the existence and value of the vernacular story, while also providing a convenient screen for his own involvement. The illusion of several people being involved in the editing, commenting, and preface writing to the collections also contributes to this justification, as multiple literati voices appear to argue for the legitimacy of the genre. Feng's success in arguing for the legitimacy of the vernacular short story laid the foundation for Ling's declaration of authorship. This assertion, unusually bold compared to previous works of vernacular fiction, allowed the genre

[20] Shuixiang jushi 睡鄉居士, "*Erke pai'an jingqi* xu" 《二刻拍案驚奇》序, in Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.1.

to break free from the pretence of popular origin and gave it renewed space to grow into. At the same time, Ling Mengchu took advantage of Feng's legitimization of vernacular fiction as a literary genre to reimagine the vernacular story by shifting the focus onto enhancing their functional effect, privileging didacticism and entertainment.

Undermining the storyteller

The distance afforded by the disavowal of authorship in *Sanyan* allows for a large degree of flexibility in the attitude to the simulated storyteller, whose judgements are undermined or reinforced depending on the situation.[21] The freedom to undermine the storyteller's stated judgements, either through explicit challenge using the role of the commentator, or implicit contradiction using the role of the writer, also enables a greater depth of moral nuance.

Explicit challenges to the storyteller's authority appear throughout the collections. In TY-19, a tale set in the Tang dynasty, the storyteller mentions a game called "beating the horse" 打馬.[22] The commentator interjects at this point, noting, "'Beating the horse' originated in the Jingkang era; it did not exist in the Tang" 打馬戲起於靖康年

[21] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.153-4.
[22] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.262.

間，唐時未有.[23] Another example of this can be found in TY-1, which tells the story of the two legendary friends Yu Boya 俞伯牙 and Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期. The commentator points out a factual inaccuracy in the story through reference to an older, more authoritative source, and muses "Fiction is generally not an accurate record" 小說大抵非實錄.[24] These exposures of factual errors in the narrative drastically decrease the storyteller's credibility. The storyteller's judgement is also called into question. TY-20 sees the commentator complain that "Storytellers all base their judgements on the success and failure [of the characters]" 說話的都以成敗論事,[25] signposting to the reader that the storyteller's moralizing cannot necessarily be taken seriously. On occasion, the commentator can be even more blunt: "Ridiculous!" 荒唐 is how he assesses one particularly strange event in GJ-36.[26]

The storyteller's credibility is also assaulted in more implicit ways, as Yang Shuhui has demonstrated.[27] An example of this can be found in GJ-2. The storyteller heaps great praise on the female character Axiu 阿秀, who epitomises traditional female virtue: she refuses to betray her penniless betrothed husband against her family's wishes, and later kills herself in shame at finding that her virginity has been taken by

[23] Ibid., p.265.
[24] Ibid., p.12.
[25] Ibid., p.280.
[26] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.548.
[27] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.64-69.

a trickster. Despite the storyteller's praise for her virtue, she is not rewarded for it in the plot as should be the case in the scheme of karmic retribution that the storyteller promotes so heavily. The mismatch between Axiu's exaggerated virtue and her lack of karmic reward invalidates not only the storyteller's judgement, but also "conventional morality itself".[28]

The way in which Feng undermines his storyteller epitomises his approach to the short story: by repeatedly and deliberately contradicting the storyteller, he invites the reader to interpret the storyteller's moral judgements sceptically, introducing complex moral and literary nuances to the stories that would be impossible to create otherwise. The implicit questioning of conventional morality and ironic erosion of traditional images of virtue seen in stories such as GJ-2 allow for a more nuanced portrayal of character types, and add greatly to the literary interest of the collections. However, Feng's compromised storyteller is, as a result, less effective as a didactic instrument. The consequences of Feng's undermining of the *Sanyan* storyteller are visible in the way all three textual roles are used for didacticism and entertainment.

Didacticism

[28] Ibid., p.69.

Firstly the use of textual roles for political discursion and moral didacticism in *Erpai*, as analysed in Chapter Three, will be compared to examples of equivalent techniques found in the *Sanyan* collections.

Political discursion

Political discursion is less prominent in *Sanyan* than *Erpai*. The main technique used for political discursion in *Erpai*, discursive tangents such as those on famine policy and autopsy analysed in Chapter Three, is not used in *Sanyan* in the same way. Though *Sanyan* contains some passages which are superficially similar, they do in fact have a fundamentally different nature. Perhaps the passage in *Sanyan* that comes closest to the politically discursive tangents in *Erpai* is found in GJ-22. This story is centred around the reviled Song minister Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213-1275), and relates a series of episodes highlighting his venality, brutality, and incompetence during his rise to power, before telling the story of his death. The unintended negative consequences associated with his introduction of new field policies designed to strengthen the military are explored by the storyteller:

> What is the "field cap law"? At the time, major landowners had vast tracts of fields, while the lower orders had not enough land to stand an awl on end. Those who had fields did not plough them, and those that would plough had no fields. [Therefore, it was decided that] the number

of fields that could be possessed should be limited according to official rank. An official household of a particular rank should have a certain number of fields, and their tenants should have a certain number of fields. Fields in excess of the cap were repurchased, transferred, or nationalised. “Repurchasing” refers to allowing the original seller to reclaim the field, no matter how long ago the sale. “Transferring” refers to selecting a wealthy family still under the field cap who will purchase the field. “Nationalizing” refers to the state purchasing the field. These were known as “public fields”. Workers were hired to plough and sow, and rent charged to pay for military expenditures. {It appears to make some sort of sense and be completely workable, the argument is [illegible]. When lesser men are involved in government, they do not notice problems brewing because of abstract principle.} It was first implemented in western Zhejiang, and once precedents had been set it was rolled out to all areas. It was generally the case that the fields that were repurchased or transferred were lower grade fields, and tax was also charged on the price. Meanwhile, good fields were purchased by the state, at below the original price. This caused great disturbances in the Zhejiang region, and there were none not driven to bankruptcy. At the time, cries of complaint filled the roads. {This corruption is inevitable. If it was implemented fairly and the people left to their own devices, then even Wang Anshi’s “green sprouts law” would be a great policy and of no harm!}

怎叫做限田之法？如今大戶田連阡陌，小民無立錐之地，有田者不耕，欲耕者無田。宜以官品大小，限其田數。某等官戶止該田若干，其民戶止該田若干。余在限外者，或回買，或派買，或官買。回買者，原系其人所賣，不拘年遠，許其回贖。派買者，揀殷實人戶，不滿限者派去，要他用價買之。官買者，官出價買之，名為「公田」，顧人耕種，收租以為軍餉之費。【似有一種道理，鑿鑿可行，辯言□□，小人要聞政，以道理之故，釀弊而不覺也】先行之浙右，候有端緒，然後各路照式舉行。大率回買、派買的都是下等之田，又要照價抽稅入官；其上等好田，官府自買，又未免虧損原價。浙中大擾，無不破家者，其時怨聲載道。【必然之弊，若公道舉行，聽民自便，雖王安石青苗法，亦是美政，何害？】[29]

This discursive tangent differs from the examples seen in *Erpai* in that the storyteller presents it in a descriptive, not rhetorical, mode. The language used reflects this: the register is relatively formal compared to the witty, lively, colloquial tone seen in the *Erpai* discursions. Instead of attempting to actively persuade the reader through rhetorical techniques, as in *Erpai*, the storyteller describes the consequences of the laws and leaves the reader to form their own opinions. The storyteller's description of the effect of the laws is aimed more at bolstering the story's negative portrayal of Jia Sidao than promoting an alternative to the policies or criticizing their underlying

[29] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.337-338; comments p.351.

premise. As a result of this focus, ventriloquistic techniques are not employed to advance the argument.

The use of the commentator role also differs: as there is no argument being advanced by the storyteller, the commentator is not used in direct support of the storyteller. Instead, there is a greater distance between the two personas, with the storyteller relating events as historical fact and the commentator drawing his own conclusions from the events. The political points in the passage are being made by the commentator alone and are generalised, concerning the gap between theory and practice, rather than being specific to the issue under discussion as in *Erpai*. In this regard, the comments are similar to the "passing political points" made by the commentator role in *Erpai*.[30]

The pattern seen in this passage, in which the storyteller role remains in descriptive mode while generalised comments are made by the commentator role, is replicated throughout the collections. However, there are occasional instances in which a point made by the storyteller is supported by the commentator, one example being found in HY-33. In this story, the storyteller criticises the hasty judgement of an official, urging other officials to take note and apply more caution in their judgements, while

[30] See Chapter Three, p.216.

the commentator appears to support this.[31] However, such instances are few and far between, reflecting the relative lack of focus on political discursion in *Sanyan*.

The greater importance placed on political discursion in *Erpai* is neatly illustrated by the contrasting ways the two collections approach the topic of famine relief measures. As analysed in Chapter Three, *Erpai* ruthlessly dismantles the logic behind current famine relief measures and makes an alternative proposal. When the topic arises in the *Sanyan* stories HY-20 and TY-12, however, it is not developed in the same depth. In HY-20, the corruption of minor officials who embezzle rice assigned by higher-ranking officials to feed the poor during a famine is marked by the storyteller with a resigned observation, as this couplet illustrates:

> Though as an official you are as pure as water;
>
> It's hard to escape functionaries being as slippery as oil.
>
> 隨你官清似水
>
> 難逃吏滑如油[32]

[31] The comment is marked as completely illegible in the 1991 Shanghai guji chubanshe edition, though the characters "Good X; it is beneficial to X it" 好□□之有益 can be made out in the *Guben xiaoshuo congkan* edition. From the legible characters, it is highly likely that the commentator is agreeing with the storyteller at this point. See Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.740; Feng Menglong, *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言, in *Guben xiaoshuo congkan* series 30, p.2035.

[32] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.392.

The point barely classes as criticism, and is not specific to famine relief. The current policy prescription is not challenged, nor are any alternatives proposed. Similarly, in TY-12, the storyteller describes the link between famine, banditry, and war, with officials pressing for tax payment for the military during times of famine causing people to escape to the forests and become bandits. The harsh punishments meted out to those who cannot pay tax are only implicitly criticised by the storyteller,[33] while the commentator merely mentions that "being able to handle [this situation] appropriately at this time is when the techniques of the able functionary become apparent" 此時調停得體，方見能吏手段.[34] Again, the topic is not used as an opportunity for sustained political discursion beyond a generalised, passing observation. While *Erpai* attempts to change policy with its political discursion, *Sanyan* is content merely to note policy flaws.

The increased importance of political discursion in *Erpai* is also evident in the way the storyteller and commentator roles are used to focus the interpretation of the story on a specific political point. In this way, filial piety is removed as the main theme of II-31 in favour of an attack on autopsy policy, and II-21 is cast as a warning against overhasty judgement rather than as an illustration of the power of divine dreams.

[33] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.163.
[34] Ibid., p.168.

Sanyan, on the other hand, does not contain any examples of a political message being installed as the main theme of the story by the storyteller and commentator roles.

As mentioned briefly above, the one technique of political discursion shared between *Erpai* and *Sanyan* is the use of the commentator to make incidental political points in passing. While the vast majority of these incidental political points in *Sanyan* are observations, there is one example of a concrete political proposal being made in HY-39. Here, the commentator reacts to a mass prison break by advocating trying bandits as soon as they are apprehended, thus eliminating the possibility of bribes, escapes, and other malpractice.[35]

This example is rare among the political discursion of *Sanyan* not only for featuring coordination between storyteller and commentator roles, but also for its contemporary relevance. Generally, the political discursion seen in *Sanyan* is much more focused on the past than that in *Erpai*. The discursive tangent on field policy is completely historical in relevance, and is found as part of a story focused on the Song minister Jia Sidao. Other stories with a political edge, such as TY-4, GJ-32, and GJ-22, are also squarely centred on bad ministers of the past. For example, GJ-32 narrates the

[35] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.888. The comment is partially illegible in all editions consulted, but the sense is clear.

misdeeds and treachery of the reviled Qin Kuai 秦檜 (1090-1155), subsequently revealing the excruciating tortures he and other corrupt officials must undergo in the netherworld. The opening of TY-21 also contains a segment in which characters conduct a discussion on the relative strengths and disadvantages of previous dynasties,[36] while in HY-30, a gang of outlaws persuade a scholar to join them through criticising endemic corruption in the official appointments system supervised by the minister Yang Guozhong 楊國忠 (d.756).[37] TY-4 also uses character monologue to criticise the failings of Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1012-1086) New Laws.[38] Though political appraisal is a prominent part of these stories, the criticism is generally specific to the historical background of the events of the plot. The exception to this rule is very common problems such as official corruption, which have a universal relevance occasionally highlighted by the commentator.[39] However, in general *Sanyan* shows a tendency towards specific historical judgements and away from political discursion with a direct contemporary relevance (of course, it is nearly always possible to find an implication with some contemporary relevance in fictional depictions of past politics). That *Erpai* shows the opposite tendency illustrates the way in which political discursion is more urgent concern in Ling's stories.

[36] Feng Menglong, *JSTY,* p.281-282.
[37] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.661-662.
[38] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.46.
[39] For examples, see Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.611; *JSTY*, p.51, 157.

Moral didacticism

Sanyan contains significantly more moral didacticism than it does political discursion. However, as Yang Shuhui and others have demonstrated, much of the storyteller's moralizing is subject to ironic erosion and cannot be taken at face value. Nevertheless, the stories contain plentiful examples of Feng making a serious moral point.

Story GJ-10 begins with a *ci* poem on the theme of brotherly harmony before the storyteller delivers a lengthy argument on the importance of getting along with siblings, especially where inheritances are concerned. The story itself, naturally, concerns an inheritance dispute.

> So the classics of the three teachings of the world today all instruct people to do good…they fill boxes and cover tables, but their tens of thousands of words are naught but superfluous pustules. As far as I'm concerned, to be a good person you only need a "two character classic": "filial piety" and "respect for elders". Of this two character classic, you only need to understand one character: "filial piety". If you are filial and obedient to your parents, then you will love who they love and respect who they respect. So among siblings with the same breath and springing from the same branch, when they think of their parents, where is the reason in not getting on well? As for family property, it was scraped together by the parents, so why

make a distinction between me and you? Why compare which fields are fertile and which poor?...When families have fields already, sons still fight for more and complain that they have too little. At the slightest prompt they say that their parents were showing favouritism, and they did not divide the property evenly. {Said with passion} Under the Nine Springs of the netherworld, the parents will be unhappy in their hearts. In what way are these the actions of a filial son? That is why the ancients said it so well: "brothers are hard to come by; fields are easy to acquire"…If you harm brotherly feeling over fields and land, then you are better off as a poor man, naked with nothing to inherit: it is simpler that way, and you save much argument and dispute.

且說如今三教經典，都是教人為善的……盈箱滿案，千言萬語，看來都是贅疣。依我說，要做好人，只消個兩字經，是「孝弟」兩個字。那兩字經中，又只消理會一個字，是個「孝」字，假如孝順父母的，見父母所愛者亦愛之；父母所敬者亦敬之，何況兄弟行中，同氣連枝，想到父母身上去，那有不和不睦之理？就是家私田產，總是父母掙來的，分什麼爾我？較什麼肥瘠？……見成有田有地，兀自爭多嫌寡，動不動推說爹娘偏愛，分受不均。【說得痛切】那爹娘在九泉之下，他心上必然不樂。此豈是孝子所為？所以古人說得好，道是：「難得者兄弟，易得者田地。」……若是為田地上壞了手足親情，到不如窮漢，赤光光沒得承受，反為乾淨，省了許多是非口舌。[40]

[40] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.145-146; comment p.163.

In contrast to the passage on field policy analysed above, the storyteller is firmly in rhetorical mode. The language used is lively and colloquial, and employs humorous exaggeration to great effect, especially in the opening section emphasizing the importance of filial piety. The rhetorical bent to the passage also creates the circumstances for the storyteller to use upstream ventriloquism, quoting received wisdom from the "ancients" in support of his argument. Furthermore, the commentator's interjection indicates his approval of the argument in a ventriloqual exchange like those seen in *Erpai*.

Another technique seen in *Erpai*, that of using the commentator to draw out a moral or political point not made explicit in the main text, is used more frequently in the *Sanyan* collections. In HY-29, Lu Guangzu 陸光祖 (1521-1597) is a county magistrate who patiently untangles a miscarriage of justice that others had ignored.[41] While the storyteller describes Lu poring over the case, the commentator interjects, saying, "Lord Lu had a proliferation of descendants, and those who attained the top grade in the examinations were as numerous as the clouds. This is all a reward for his [illegible] virtue." 陸公子孫繁衍，迄甲第如雲，皆□德之報也.[42] The information about Lu's descendants is not supplied elsewhere in the story: this is therefore a rather

[41] Ibid., p.655.
[42] Ibid., p.658.

drastic intervention by the commentator in order to highlight the workings of karmic retribution and forcibly apply them to the story.

The commentator makes a similar intervention in HY-32. The story tells of a priceless jade horse pendant that is cared for by a Scholar Huang 黃秀才. Later, the pendant changes into a white horse and saves Huang's destined wife from a powerful official who has taken her for a concubine; due to the horse's miraculous intervention, the official is prevented from sleeping with her and she later marries to Huang. At the very beginning of the story, the storyteller describes Huang caring for the pendant. The commentator interjects, saying "Even caring for a jade horse pendant brings its reward, to say nothing of those who care for talented people!" 愛惜玉馬墜尚得其報，況愛惜人才者乎.[43] This comment somewhat artificially introduces the mechanism of karmic reward into the story (nowhere does the storyteller emphasise the involvement of the pendant in a cycle of reward), and then develops the incident into a wider moral lesson. The greater frequency of this type of "solo" moralizing by the commentator in *Sanyan* is reflective of Feng's tendency to undermine the storyteller: the commentator has to get involved in order for a convincing moral message to be put across.

[43] Ibid., p.722.

The practice of undermining the storyteller in *Sanyan* also has the effect of weakening the "encouragement and warning" model of moral didacticism seen in *Erpai*. While, as seen in Chapter Three, Ling uses his textual roles to create paragons such as Liu Yuanpu and objects of ridicule such as Wu Yue, using the commentator role to reinforce the storyteller's characterization choices, the situation in *Sanyan* is somewhat more complex, leading to a far more ambiguous moral message. Yang Shuhui has analysed this complexity with relation to GJ-1, "Jiang Xingge chonghui zhenzhu shan" 蔣興哥重會珍珠衫 (Jiang Xingge Is Reunited with the Pearl Shirt), based on the earlier literary language story *Zhenzhu Shan* 珍珠衫 (The Pearl Shirt). In this story, the newly-married Jiang Xingge leaves his wife to travel on business, promising to be back after a year. However, he is detained through illness and cannot return. His wife Sanqiao 三巧 grows lonely, and is tricked into an affair with Chen Dalang 陳大郎 by a cunning old woman. She gives Chen Dalang a pearl shirt once belonging to Jiang as a token when he too goes travelling. Chen and Jiang meet, and Jiang recognises the shirt and becomes aware of his wife's adultery. He divorces her without making the adultery public; she remarries an official. Chen Dalang soon dies, and Jiang marries his wife. Later, Jiang is charged with murder, and Sanqiao pleads with her new husband to pardon him. He does so, and allows Sanqiao to remarry Jiang, but only as his concubine.

At the start of the story, the storyteller states that it will be a demonstration of the karmic punishment for adultery. However, as Yang Shuhui demonstrates, Feng exerts "great effort…to secure the reader's sympathy for the adulteress",[44] casting Sanqiao in "a more favourable light to subvert the narrator's conventional views".[45] Sanqiao is not subject to anything like the retribution that the narrator claims is inevitable, with her final reduction in status a very mild punishment compared to the gravity of the crime of adultery in Ming China. The result of Feng's interventions to win sympathy for Sanqiao is to call into question the conventional morality expressed by the narrator, creating a more nuanced, complex didactic message than that generally found in *Erpai*.

One didactic technique seen in both *Sanyan* and *Erpai* is the practice of altering plots to make a didactic message clearer, though in the case of *Sanyan* this is not always straightforward: in the source for GJ-1, the events of Chen Dalang's death, Jiang's marriage to Chen's wife, and Jiang's remarriage to Sanqiao were originally described as an alternative ending, separate from the main plot. Feng's incorporation of these events into his story should, on the face of it, make the didactic message of his version clearer through completing the cycle of karmic retribution; however, as seen

[44] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.52.
[45] Ibid.

above, he simultaneously took steps to problematise this message. There are also examples of the type of didactic plot alteration seen in *Erpai*, however. JS-33 was adapted from an earlier vernacular story, "Cuo ren shi" 錯認屍 (The Misidentified Corpse", found in *Liushijia xiaoshuo*. The climax of the action comes when a travelling merchant's wife murders a servant who seduced her husband's concubine and daughter and disposes of the corpse in the river. It is soon found, but misidentified, though a local ruffian recognises it correctly and attempts to blackmail her. The blackmail is unsuccessful, and he reports the wife to the authorities; she, the concubine, and the daughter all die in jail. The husband returns and, heartbroken, throws himself into the lake. In the *Sanyan* version, Feng adds an episode in which the husband's ghost returns to take revenge on the blackmailer.[46] As noted by the commentator role,[47] this addition helps to keep the scheme of karmic retribution intact, enhancing the moral didacticism of the story.

Audience ventriloquism, the third major technique used for moral didacticism in *Erpai*, is virtually unused for this purpose in *Sanyan*. Though there are plenty of examples of the storyteller being "asked" a question by the audience, these generally function as a way to move the plot on, or to transition between an introductory story

[46] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.514.
[47] Ibid., p.515.

and the main story. Audience ventriloquism is used as an opportunity for moralizing only once, in HY-34. The audience member complains that an evil character has not been punished, while the storyteller counters that their punishment will inevitably come in the future. Even in this instance, its deployment is as much about moving the narrative between different strands of the plot as it is about moralizing: as the narrator continues, "I only have one mouth; I don't have two tongues. If I tell of [what is happening] there, it's hard to attend to [what is happening here]" 小子只有一張口，沒有兩副舌，說了那邊，便難顧這邊.[48] The dramatic expanding of the use of audience ventriloquism for moralistic purposes in *Erpai* is another marker of Ling's collection's increased focus on didactic effect.

Entertainment

Next, the use of textual roles to enhance entertainment value in *Erpai* will be compared to similar examples from *Sanyan*. This comparative analysis is, like Chapter Four, structured around three roles in the text; the "writer" role has been changed to "editor" in this chapter to reflect Feng's different creative contribution to the production of his collections.

Editor

[48] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.766.

Firstly, Feng Menglong's role as editor, or "finaliser" in Yang Shuhui's terminology, in making the *Sanyan* stories more entertaining will be compared to Ling's equivalent role in *Erpai*, with reference to the techniques identified in Chapter Four. In *Erpai*, this primarily consisted of introducing humour and, especially, eroticism to the stories; most of the extraordinary events were inherited from the source materials. While in general the *Sanyan* collections have less erotic content than *Erpai*, and in particular do not seek to introduce erotic associations where they are not directly pertinent to the plot (a tendency also visible in the use of the storyteller and commentator roles), *Sanyan* does contain instances where the sources are exaggerated to make the stories more erotic. Interestingly, the final collection *Xingshi hengyan* contains noticeably more eroticism than the previous two collections. This could reflect a divergence of tastes between Feng and the collaborator who wrote over half of this collection, or it could mark an evolution in what Feng, as "finaliser", considered morally appropriate.

The first story to be examined is HY-15. This tells the story of He Daqing 赫大卿, a libidinous young man who one day goes in search of women to impress and seduce. However, he is unsuccessful in his quest and stops off at an inn for a drink. After leaving the inn he gets thirsty and stops at a nunnery to ask for some water or tea. As it turns out, the two resident nuns, Kongzhao 空照 and Jingzhen 靜真, have

prodigious sexual appetites of their own. He spends the next couple of months in the nunnery, sleeping with the nuns and their two novices both in turn and together. The nuns prevent him from leaving by getting him drunk and shaving his head. Soon after, the inevitable happens and he dies of sexual exhaustion. The nuns bury his body in the garden. That autumn, He's house is damaged by heavy rain, and his wife Lu 陸 recognises a mandarin duck belt worn by one of the workmen as belonging to He. It turns out that it was found at the nunnery, and Lu sends the workman to investigate. When he is at the nunnery, one of the novices lets slip the truth about what happened after Jingzhen beats her for a minor offence. Lu organises her servants to march to the nunnery and exhume her husband's corpse. However, Lu does not recognise her husband's body due to his haggard frame and shaved head, and she and the servants dash off in a panic to put their story to the authorities. The corpse is believed to be that of a missing monk. Meanwhile, the nuns realise that the game is up and escape to a neighbouring nunnery where they are given shelter. By chance, the nuns here have kidnapped the missing monk and are keeping him there, dressed as a nun, in order to sleep with him. When the officials trace Kongzhao and Jingzhen and bring all the nuns before the court, the truth is finally established and both cases solved.

The story as presented in *Xingshi hengyan* and summarised above varies dramatically from the source materials. The primary source appears to be from *Jinglin zaji* 涇林雜

記 (Miscellaneous Records of Jinglin), and the tale is also collected in Feng's own work *Qingshi* 情史 (A History of Love).[49] While the main plotline in the sources is largely similar to that outlined above, the secondary plotline involving the misrecognition of the corpse and the missing monk is not present in the sources and has been integrated into the story during the rewriting process. The addition of these events renders the plot more entertaining by giving the story an unexpected plot twist, ratcheting up the dramatic tension as the reader is left wondering how all the ends will be tied up. The version in *Sanyan* also has two extra characters: the two novices. Their addition gives the story further erotic spice, similar to the function of Taisu and Taiqing in I-17:[50] the foursome between Kongzhao, He Daqing, and the two novices is not mentioned in any of the sources.[51] The edits to this tale show a clear strategy tailored towards making the story more entertaining than the source, by amplifying its dramatic and erotic aspects. This strategy is one also seen in *Erpai*.

Another way to achieve the same ends is to flesh out the plot events inherited from the sources. One example of a story adapted in this way is HY-23, which itemises the sex life of Prince Hailing of Jin 金海陵王 (1122-1161) and is possibly the story with the most sexual content in all three volumes of *Sanyan*. While the events described,

[49] Feng Menglong, "He Yingxiang" 赫應祥, *Qingshi* 情史 j.18, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.459.
[50] See Chapter Four, p.307.
[51] Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.458-463.

including the sexual encounters, are based on historical records in the *Jin shi* 金史 (Book of Jin), the *Sanyan* version includes far more titillating detail. However, this particular story could be regarded as a failure in entertainment terms, as it generally does not succeed in breaking from the tone of the historical chronicler and introducing dramatic tension, leaving the narrative as a series of dry vernacular descriptions of Hailing's sexual exploits.

A more successful expansion of an erotic plot event from the source materials is found in HY-8. In this story, Sun Zhuyi 孫珠姨 is betrothed to Liu Pu 劉璞. However, Liu Pu falls ill, though the family attempt to hold the wedding as planned so he can be "blasted with joy" 沖喜 and thus cured. The Sun family, on the other hand, are worried about marrying their daughter to a man who may die at any minute. Therefore, they dress their son Yulang 玉郎 up as a woman and send him over to Liu's household in her place. After the wedding ceremony, Liu Pu needs to rest due to his illness, and so Yulang shares a room with Huiniang 慧娘, Liu Pu's beautiful (and betrothed) sister. That night the inevitable happens, and Yulang and Huiniang begin a secret affair, which soon becomes public. It is left to the local official to sort out the tangled mess of relationships.

The source materials, which include Feng's own works *Qingshi* and *Gujin tangai* 古今譚概 (A Survey of Gossip Past and Present), mention the illicit coupling merely by noting "the two secretly became husband and wife" 二人竟私為夫婦矣,[52] or in the case of an alternative source, "they had been doing bad for a long time" 所為不善久矣.[53] In contrast, the version in HY-8 goes far beyond the level of elaboration that is strictly necessary in the process of adapting a literary language tale into the vernacular. The process of Yulang's seduction of Huiniang is narrated in minute detail and no little humour, as his true gender is only revealed right at the end. He first arouses her with talk of weddings, then mischievously suggests that they are a "female husband and wife" 女夫妻,[54] as a light-hearted excuse to get into the same bedcovers. As they fondle and kiss, Huiniang puzzles over why Yulang has no breasts, while Yulang keeps reassuring her that they are "just playing after all, there's shame in it!" 縱是取笑，有什麼羞.[55] Eventually, Huiniang finds Yulang's penis, and they make love. The relish with which the episode is described shows a clear desire to extract the maximum amount of entertainment value possible from the situation.

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[52] Feng Menglong, "Jiaqu qi he" 嫁娶奇合, *Gujin tangai* 古今談概 j.36 and Feng Menglong, "Kunshan min" 崑山民, *Qingshi* j.2, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.425.

[53] Luo Ye 羅燁, "Yin xiongzi decheng fufu" 因兄姊得成夫婦, *Zuiweng tanlu bing ji* 醉翁談錄丙集 j.1, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, 425.

[54] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.156.

[55] Ibid., p.157.

Increased eroticism is not the only way in which the *Sanyan* stories are made more entertaining. In HY-28, a young man, Wu Yan 吳彥, finds himself an accidental stowaway on his lover He Xiu'e's 賀秀娥 boat. By day, he hides under the bed, while at night he emerges and the couple make love. Xiu'e attempts to cover up her daytime lethargy and increased hunger (Wu has a huge appetite) by feigning illness, though in the end their ruse is discovered. Her parents are taken in by her fake illness and invite a succession of renowned doctors to examine her. Each doctor arrives with great self-importance before diagnosing an unusual disease, justifying themselves with abstruse theories in the face of Xiu'e's father's scepticism. Finally, Xiu'e's mother hears Wu snoring, and the riddle is solved. This entire episode has been added in the adaptation process: the source states that the lovers were discovered after the girl's sister-in-law hears them talking, her suspicions aroused because of Xiu'e's increased appetite.[56] The introduction of the pompous doctors adds greatly to the entertainment value of the story, through its mocking humour and the sheer absurdity of the situation. As with the previous examples, the addition of this episode is part of a wider strategy aimed at making the stories more entertaining.

Storyteller

[56] Zhong Xing 鍾惺, "Wu shi nü" 吳氏女, *Ming'ai shigui* 名媛詩歸 j.28, cited from Tan Zhengbi, *SYLPZL* v.2, p.519.

This section compares the use of the storyteller role in *Erpai* and *Sanyan* to make the stories more entertaining, with particular reference to the techniques identified and analysed in Chapter Four: humorous verse, a focus on slapstick humour, taking advantage of the strengths of the vernacular language, and explicit emphasis of the entertainment value of the stories.

The first of these techniques is explicit emphasis of entertainment value. The formal characteristics of the *Sanyan* stories, which often have a less developed introductory story, do not lend themselves as well to this technique as *Erpai*: such explicit emphasis is most easily inserted into the segue between introductory story and main story. However, the technique is occasionally found where the form allows, such as in GJ-36, where the storyteller declares that a miser "caused a huge incident, which was turned into a story with the sound of laughter" 弄出非常大事，變做一段有笑聲的小說.[57]

A more widely seen technique is using verse to humorous effect, as this example from HY-7 describing a character called Yan Jun 顏俊 (Handsome Face) shows:

Face as black and turbid as the base of a pot; eyes as round as a copper bell.

[57] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.527.

Spots densely arrayed like the heads of bulbous nails; yellowed hair in a mess on both temples.

Teeth coated in true gold; a body hammered out of solid iron.

Stretch out his five fingers and he could use them as hammers; what a waste of being called "Handsome Face".

面黑渾如鍋底，眼圓卻似銅鈴。

痘疤密擺泡頭釘，黃髮蓬鬆兩鬢。

牙齒真金鍍就，身軀頑鐵敲成。

揸開五指鼓鎚能，枉了名呼顏俊。[58]

The exaggerated descriptions in the poem are humorous in their own right, and also serve to highlight the irony inherent in the choice of the character's name. Another example mocks an old man who has taken a young woman as a concubine:

One with a black official's hat and white hair; one with fresh temples and red makeup.

Withered vines wrap round a tree, tender flowers smell sweet; just like embracing your wetnurse's husband.

One is desolate at heart; one is secretly panicked.

[58] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.127.

Only worried that "it" is too weak; two hands are not enough to keep it up.

一個烏紗白髮，一個綠鬢紅粧。

枯藤纏樹嫩花香，好似奶公相傍。

一個心中淒楚，一個暗地驚慌。

只愁那話忒郎當，雙手扶不上。[59]

This example is directly comparable to the verse on the same topic from II-10, already analysed in Chapter Four:[60]

An old man who still hasn't changed his lecherous ways, he sees a young girl and pesters her constantly, how could he know that it's really awkward to get things done? You stroke his cheeks and they're nothing but wrinkles; you kiss him and it's all white whiskers; and when you get to the important moment, he's soft soft soft soft soft. {That spoils the fun}

老人家再不把淫心改變，見了後生家只管歪纏，怎知道行事多不便？揾腮是皺面頰；做嘴是白鬚髯；正到那要緊關頭也，卻又軟軟軟軟軟。【殺風景】[61]

[59] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.147.
[60] See p.317.
[61] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.178.

While the storytellers in both works use the old man's erectile difficulties as a source of humour, the example from *Erpai* employs more colloquial language while also foregrounding the humour to a greater extent through the exaggerated repetition of the character *ruan* 軟. In addition, while the verse in *Erpai* concentrates on the physical, describing the touch of wrinkled cheeks and white whiskers, the *Sanyan* verse is given an extra, more thoughtful, dimension through its description of the "desolate" feelings of the young woman. The example from *Erpai* is solely aimed at entertainment, while in *Sanyan* the equivalent verse also incorporates broader, more literary aims.

As discussed in Chapter Four, an important part of the storyteller's contribution to the entertainment value of *Erpai* originates from the heavy emphasis on slapstick comedy expressed through narrative style. This technique can also be found in *Sanyan*, though instances of it are less frequent. This example comes from HY-7. Yan Jun, the ugly man described in the humorous verse above, has sent his handsome cousin Qian Qing 錢青 to Gao Zan's 高贊 island home to marry Gao's daughter Qiufang 秋芳 on Yan's behalf; the plan is that once back to the mainland she will be handed over to Yan. However, Qian is delayed for a few days by a storm, and Yan believes that he has slept with Qiufang. When Qian's boat arrives, a fight breaks out, and the secret is revealed:

Qian Qing grew panicked from his beating and could do nothing but call out for help. The people on the boat heard the commotion and all came ashore to look. They saw an ugly man beating the “groom” hard, and did not know why. They all crowded over to break it up, but could not persuade him to step away. Gao Zan interrogated one of [Yan’s] servants. The servant thought that he could not hide the situation any longer, and told Gao the truth. If Gao hadn’t heard, all would be fine, but as soon as he heard, rage exploded in his heart, and he cursed [the matchmaker] You Chen for his outrageous actions and for being this type of lying and cheating matchmaker and swindling people’s daughters. He grabbed a hold of You Chen and started beating him. Gao’s servants, who had come to deliver the bride, also felt hard done by and all started to hit out at the ugly man. Yan’s servants came back to protect their master, and started fighting with Gao’s people. First it was one set of two- Yan Jun and Qian Qing- fighting, then Gao Zan and You Chen joined them to make it two sets of two, and in the end the servants of both houses were tangled up fighting each other. The people watching piled up and their numbers increased, blocking the streets and making them hard to traverse.

錢青喫打慌了，但呼救命。船上人聽得鬧炒，都上岸來看。只見一個醜漢將新郎痛打，正不知甚麼意故。都走攏來解勸，那裏勸得他開。高贊盤問他家人，那家人料瞞不過，只得實說了。高贊不聞猶可，一聞之時，心頭火起，大罵尤辰無理，做這等欺三瞞四的媒人，說騙人家女兒。也扭著尤辰亂打起來。高家送親的人，也自心懷不

平，一齊動手，要打那醜漢。顏家的家人，回護家主，就與高家從人對打。先前顏俊和錢青是一對廝打，以後高贊和尤辰是兩對廝打，結末兩家家人扭做一團廝打。看的人重重疊疊，越發多了，街道擁塞難行。[62]

As in similar episodes in *Erpai*, the detailed description of the gradual yet inevitable descent into farce contributes greatly to the humour of the passage. However, despite this passage and a similarly slapstick situation in HY-20,[63] this particular technique is less important in *Sanyan*. In its place, *Sanyan* prefers a humour derived more from the situation than the method of its narration. An example of this is found in GJ-39, which describes Wang Ge 汪革 being falsely accused of rebellion in an act of revenge. The official sent to investigate is too scared to confront Wang and hides out in the mountains for a few days before reporting that the rebellion is real. As a consequence, Wang then actually does rebel, beheading an official sent to mediate. His followers gradually desert him, and after mindlessly burning down a temple Wang escapes his hapless pursuers. In contrast to the exaggerated slapstick narration seen in *Erpai* and the example above, the narration is relatively deadpan. The humour is more implicit, derived from the travails of the hopelessly incompetent officials.

[62] Feng Menglong, *XSHY* p.142.
[63] Ibid., p.423.

The storyteller in *Sanyan* also contributes to the entertainment in the stories through his use of vivid and lively language. This includes many of the stock phrases also seen in *Erpai* and other fictional works, such as "open up the eight pieces of the skull and pour a bucket of icy water in" 分開八片頂陽骨，傾下一桶雪水來 and "stuck his/her tongue out and could not draw it back in again for some time" 伸了舌頭出來，一時縮不進去. However, unlike in *Erpai*, the situation that caused the shock is often revealed *before* the set phrase is deployed, thus detracting from the suspense. Examples of this appear in TY-30,[64] TY-33,[65] and HY-18.[66]

Like Ling, Feng also uses more original language as well. In HY-3, when a poor oil seller has saved enough to became a client of the brothel he normally sells oil to, the storyteller remarks that "the seats in the customers' area had not yet made acquaintance with his bottom" 這客座裡交椅，還不曾與他屁股做個相識.[67] Another example comes from TY-30, where a traveller with a dry mouth, parched throat, burning lips, and hot nose stops at a house to ask for some water. When he sees a pretty girl come out, his "mouth got dryer, his throat even more parched, his lips burned fiercer, and his nose got hotter" 口一發燥，咽一發乾，唇一發焦，鼻一發熱.[68] As in *Erpai*, the cumulative effect of this style of narration builds up to

[64] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.465.
[65] Ibid., p.513.
[66] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.361.
[67] Ibid., p.49.
[68] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.457.

have a strong influence on the character of the stories and make them more entertaining.

While this use of vivid language is an entertaining feature common to both collections, Feng and Ling differ in how explicitly sexual they are willing to make their descriptions. While *Erpai* periodically contains vivid and humorous descriptions of sexual organs, masturbation, and sex, *Sanyan*, while it contains sexual content, does not mine it for humour with the same relish seen in *Erpai*. This can be seen through a comparison of similar descriptions of sexual desire in the two collections. The first three examples are given from *Sanyan*.

From TY-23:

> [He] stood pressed tightly against the awning, and stared at Shunniang with an unswerving gaze. He could barely restrain himself from walking up to her, embracing her with both hands, and speaking to her. {Awkward feelings this time}
>
> 緊緊的貼著席棚而立，覷定順娘目不轉睛，恨不得走近前去，雙手摟抱，說句話兒。【此番甚難為情】[69]

[69] Ibid., p.328; comment p.331.

From HY-28:

Before as much time as it takes to drink a bowl of tea had passed, she came again to have a look. Like a running horse lantern, she made several circuits in a few minutes. She desperately wanted to skip over to Master Wu's side and tell all of her loving feelings in detail.

不上喫一碗茶的工夫，卻又走來觀看，猶如走馬燈一般，頃刻幾個盤旋。恨不得三四步走至吳衙內身邊，把愛慕之情，一一細罄。[70]

From HY-32:

Scholar Huang was near mad with joy, and was desperate to strike the sun from the sky with his fist, send Sun Wukong's Sleep Bug around all the people in the boat, and when they were all asleep and snoring, there would be just the two of them, man and woman, and they could talk to their heart's content.

[70] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.613.

黃生大喜欲狂，恨不能一拳打落日頭，把孫行者的瞌睡蟲，遍派滿船之人，等他呼呼睡去，獨留他男女二人，敘一個心滿意足。[71]

In comparison, similar descriptions from *Erpai* are given below.

From I-31:

She saw this thing of He the Daoist's [i.e. his penis] hanging down, and it was both long and large. Sai'er had gone without for a spell since her husband died: how could she not be aroused? She was desperate to grab it over.

見了何道這條物件，纍纍垂垂，且是長大。賽兒夫死後，曠了這幾時，怎不動火？恨不得搶了過來。[72]

From II-2:

The young Daoist saw her, and immediately his three spirits had flown off and his seven souls had run away. He was itching to embrace her and get down to a few things.

[71] Ibid., p.709.
[72] Ling Mengchu, *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.490.

小道人見了，先已飛去了三魂，走掉了七魄，恨不得雙手抱住了他，做一點兩點的事。[73]

Finally, from II-25:

Unfortunately, there were people around, but he desperately wanted to follow through, embrace her, and shag her for a bit.

可惜碍著前後有人，恨不就勢一把抱住，弄他一會。[74]

While in *Erpai* there are repeated examples of the storyteller using the act of sexual intercourse to describe the strength of the lust felt by a character, the *Sanyan* storyteller never goes this far. Instead, the storyteller restrains himself to describing the characters "talking" or maybe "embracing", which is the furthest that he ever allows himself to go. These examples encapsulate the difference between the eroticism of *Erpai* and that of *Sanyan*. While *Sanyan* contains plenty of eroticism, Feng does not use his storyteller to introduce gratuitous references to sex where these are not strictly necessary; Ling, on the other hand, is happy to do this where it

[73] Ling Mengchu, *EKPAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.3, p.26.
[74] Ibid., p.427.

contributes to the entertainment value of the stories. This illustrates the greater extent to which Ling is willing to test moral boundaries in the service of entertainment.

Commentator

Feng, like Ling, also uses the figure of the commentator to enhance the entertainment value of the stories. The primary way in which Feng's commentator contributes to the entertainment value of the stories is through making humorous asides. For example, in GJ-22, which is set in the closing days of the Song dynasty, the general Xia Gui 夏貴 makes a solemn promise to defend the Huaixi 淮西 region to the death. However, no sooner has he made this promise than he escapes in his boat to destinations unknown.[75] The commentator mocks Xia, saying "Good defending to the death there" 死守得好,[76] making explicit the humour implied in the farcical events of the text. The commentator role is also used to tease humour out of situations that are not intrinsically funny. In TY-34 the storyteller describes a Wang Zhong 王忠 with the words "Old Wang was a military man, and liked flattery above all else" 王翁是個武人，只好奉承;[77] the commentator interjects with the remark "It is difficult to say that civil officials do not love flattery" 文官難說不愛奉承.[78] A final example of the use of the commentator to make the stories funnier is found in TY-30. A young man, Cui

[75] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.344.
[76] Ibid., p.352.
[77] Feng Menglong, *JSTY*, p.523.
[78] Ibid., p.535.

Hu 崔護, asked a young woman for some water when passing her door, and flirted with her. She grew lovesick and died one year to the day later. Cui also returns at this time, whereupon her parents blame him for their daughter's death. He kisses the dead woman, bringing her back to life, while the commentator quips "Good doctor!" 好醫生.[79]

The other way in which the commentator contributes to the entertainment value of the stories is through the use of evaluation devices explicitly emphasising their enjoyability. In GJ-27, Mo Ji 莫稽 married the daughter of the leader of a begging syndicate, someone with great wealth but very low social status. Later, with his wife's financial assistance and encouragement, he becomes an official. Due to shame at his wife's lowly background, he pushes her in a river so that he is free to marry a woman of higher station. However, his wife is rescued from the river by Xu Dehou 許德厚, who then arranges her marriage to Mo under the pretence that she is his daughter. When Mo arrives in the bridal chamber, he is assaulted by a crowd of servants in retaliation.[80] The commentator emphasises how enjoyable it is seeing Mo punished in this way for his inconstancy, saying "If it were just a reunion between husband and

[79] Ibid., p.459; comment p.470.
[80] Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.412.

wife, it would not be wonderful; only with this beating is it pleasing" 只夫妻重合，不妙；有此一等打，才快人心.[81]

Another example of this is seen in HY-6. On his way to Chang'an, Wang Chen 王臣 shoots a fox spirit in the eye and steals a mysterious document in an unreadable script. The angry fox spirits then take revenge on him, assuming human form to persuade him that his mother has died and he must sell off his property and return home as soon as possible. On his way back home, he runs into a boat with his mother and the rest of his family on board: they have been told by the fox spirits that Wang has asked them to sell off their property and come to live in Chang'an. Wang sees his family's servants on the boat, and rationalises it with the thought that they probably were sold to another family after his mother died.[82] The commentator interjects by saying, "a wonderful misrecognition, you could make a *zaju* drama out of it!" 絕好錯認，可做雜劇.[83] In both stories, the commentator explicitly emphasises the entertainment value of the plot.

However, overall the use of the commentator role to increase the entertainment value of the stories is less pronounced in *Sanyan* than in *Erpai*. For instance, the often

[81] Ibid., p.414.
[82] Feng Menglong, *XSHY*, p.116.
[83] Ibid., p.123.

raunchy tone of the storyteller's comments in *Erpai* is absent in *Sanyan*, where the commentator has a more refined persona. Partly because of this, the commentator persona in *Sanyan* is less reminiscent of a drunken friend at a storytelling gathering than the equivalent in *Erpai*. This means that the extra entertainment value derived from the simulation of an amateur storytelling session is missing in *Sanyan*. In addition, the commentator makes an intervention in order to enhance the entertainment value of a story much more often in *Erpai*. Ling has adopted the basic techniques of using the commentator role for entertainment from *Sanyan* and developed them so that the persona plays a broader and more prominent part.

Conclusion

The above comparison between the use of textual roles for didacticism and entertainment in *Sanyan* and *Erpai* demonstrates that Ling Mengchu reimagined *huaben* fiction as it was moulded by Feng Menglong. This reimagination is illustrated by the way in which Ling uses his textual roles to privilege the functional effect of the stories over all other considerations; Feng Menglong, on the other hand, was concerned to a much greater extent with the justification of *huaben* as a literary genre, the supposed folk origin of the genre, deeper characterization, and moral nuance. This is not to say that a concern for the functional effects of didacticism and entertainmen was not present in the *Sanyan* collections; rather that in *Sanyan*, aims such as

justifying the vernacular short story and elevating it to a higher level of literary sophistication took precedence over these functional considerations. The reimagination of the genre evident in *Erpai* involves placing functional effect at the heart of the collections, privileged above all other concerns.

Didacticism became far more important in Ling's reimagining of *huaben* fiction. Firstly, political discursion is afforded far more prominence in *Erpai* than *Sanyan*. Ling, anxious to enhance the functional effect of his stories, harnessed the power of the simulated storyteller to argue for political positions, something seen only to a very limited extent in *Sanyan*. These political positions are also more focused on contemporary issues than those that are found in *Sanyan*, which concentrates to a far greater degree on judgements on the past. *Erpai* thus demonstrates more of a concern for effecting change in its own time than *Sanyan*. The difference in the way the two works address the topic of famine relief neatly highlights the way in which political discursion is privileged in *Erpai* but not in *Sanyan*: while in *Erpai* the storyteller role delivers a lengthy, vivid, narrative argument making full use of ventriloquistic rhetorical techniques, in *Sanyan* the topic is treated in a descriptive rather than rhetorical fashion by the storyteller, with the commentator role delivering only a passing judgement. In short, *Sanyan* comments on political issues; *Erpai* seeks to persuade the reader of political arguments.

At the same time, the use of the power of the storyteller role to earnestly argue moral standpoints is also expanded dramatically in *Erpai*, as the storyteller persona is freed from the ironic undermining seen in *Sanyan*. This expanded didactic use of the storyteller is coupled with more coordination between storyteller and commentator: the use of the commentator and storyteller in tandem to make a concerted point is far more common in *Erpai* than *Sanyan*. Though they speak with distinct voices, both roles cooperate in working towards the same end. Placing both commentator and storyteller on the same side of the argument in this way makes the didacticism of *Erpai* more straightforward and effective than that of *Sanyan*. However, the sometimes oppositional nature of the storyteller and commentator in *Sanyan* brings the stories an extra layer of distinct, contradictory voices. These contradictions and ironies introduce a layer of subtle literary nuance into the didacticism of the stories: they can be subject to a range of conflicting moral interpretations and provoke the reader to question and explore the issues they raise. The greater degree of nuance in the didactic messages in *Sanyan* also allows the characters room to be more human and three-dimensional in a way often precluded in *Erpai* by the use of textual roles to tightly control and channel the interpretation of their acts. The developments in the use of textual roles for didacticism seen in *Erpai* thus show a willingness to sacrifice this literary interest for didactic effectiveness. The functional effect of didacticism is

not absent from *Sanyan*; rather, the change is that *Erpai* shows a far tighter and more single-minded focus on its didactic message than *Sanyan*.

Ling's increased focus on functional effect is also evident in the way that entertainment is privileged in *Erpai*. Though many of the uses of textual roles to increase entertainment value are shared between *Sanyan* and *Erpai*, a closer comparison of the two collections shows that entertainment is privileged in *Erpai* in a way that it is not in *Sanyan*.

Firstly, *Erpai* foregrounds the entertaining feature of the extraordinary to a far greater extent than the *Sanyan* collections. This much is evident in a comparison of the titles: titles such as *Comprehensive Words to Caution the World* profess a didactic aim, while *Slapping the Table in Amazement* highlights the entertaining power of the extraordinary. The content of the prefaces, too, reflects Ling's greater focus on entertainment. While the preface to Ling's first collection is devoted to an exploration of the extraordinary, Feng's prefaces are more concerned with a justification of the genre and promotion of its didactic potential, especially where compared to more conventional didactic texts. Nevertheless, this emphasis on didactic effect in the prefaces and titles is not borne out in the stories themselves, as the above analysis has

demonstrated. This suggests that for Feng, promotion of the didactic effect of the short story is more important as a means to justify the genre than as an end in itself.

There is also evidence of the *Erpai* source materials having been pre-selected for their extraordinary qualities in a more rigorous fashion; it is difficult to imagine a story such as TY-1, which describes the well-worn story of Yu Boya 俞伯牙 playing the *qin* and his friend Zhong Ziqi's 鍾子期 appreciation of it, fitting well into *Erpai*. Not only does this retelling of an old story not have the entertainment of novelty value and contemporary relevance, the plot is rather staid and lacks any interesting twists. Though the emotional bond between the two men could justifiably be described as "extraordinary", it is a subtler, more abstract strain of the "extraordinary" than the lively, visceral extraordinary events which are more characteristic of *Erpai*.

Both collections use humour as a way to bolster their entertainment value. However, there is a difference in the tone and emphasis of the humour. *Erpai* tends towards a more direct, unsophisticated brand of humour than that seen in *Sanyan*, in which more indirect humour is used, such as in the description of the cowardly official sent to investigate Wang Ge. This is evident in *Erpai*'s greater use of slapstick humour in descriptions given by the storyteller role. The comparison of the verse passages on the erectile troubles of elderly men highlights this difference of approach: Ling focuses

entirely on making the situation as funny as possible through a focus on the physical, while Feng's verse is more restrained, and also takes time to explore the young girl's predicament. The differences between the humour in the two collections are, however, most evident in the use of the commentator role. The humour of Feng's commentator is characterised exclusively by subtle irony and sarcasm. Ling's commentator continues the use of this type of humour, but also pioneers the use of this "refined" literati persona as a means to add crude innuendo and eroticism. This side to the commentator's personality resembles the back-and-forth one might expect at an amateur storytelling gathering, and further serves to enhance the entertainment of the text by simulating this leisure activity. The contrast between the styles of the two commentator personas also serves to highlight the way in which *Erpai* is more focused on functional effect, even when this "lowers the tone" of the collection.

Finally, *Erpai* also seeks to derive far more entertainment from eroticism than *Sanyan*. This emphasis is visible across all three textual roles. As writer, Ling is willing to intervene in the adaptation process to add erotic elements far more readily than Feng is as finaliser. Both collections show an exaggeration of sexual incidents already present in their respective source materials, this being a necessary part of the adaptation process. However, *Erpai* shows a far greater willingness to add eroticism where this is not already present in the plot of the source. As storyteller, Ling is far

more willing than Feng to introduce erotic language and situations, a tendency crystallised in his readiness to mention sex in situations in which Feng mentions only "embracing" or "talking". Ling is willing to go further than Feng to ensure that his stories are entertaining, and does not hold back from resorting to eroticism to achieve this goal. Nevertheless, Ling keeps to his moral bottom line, "not being a criminal to decent taste" at all times, never deploying the most explicit or crude vocabulary available to him.

Comparative analysis of the use of textual roles in *Erpai* and *Sanyan* shows that Ling's collections show a far greater focus on both entertainment and didacticism. All three textual roles are used to maximise the entertainment value and didactic effectiveness of the collections, even where this emphasis has negative side effects for depth of characterization, moral nuance, and level of sophistication. The single-minded focus on the functional effect of the stories represents Ling simultaneously building on and turning away from Feng Menglong's earnest efforts to elevate *huaben* fiction as a legitimate literary form. Ling built on Feng's earlier works in that it is only though Feng's success in promoting the vernacular story that he had the option of taking it in a different direction; he turned away from them in that he rejected the idea that the genre's place lay in text-focused literary sophistication, and

took it towards an overriding emphasis on audience-focused entertainment and didacticism.

Afterword: Implications and Influences

Ling's reimagination of *huaben* fiction to centre it around functional effect had consequences which rippled beyond the text of *Erpai* itself. The focus on the entertainment and didacticism resulted in the genre's readers assuming a greater importance than they had in Feng Menglong's scheme, in which literary value and a mythic folk origin, both exclusive properties of the text, were regarded as the most important things about the genre. Ling dispensed with the claims of a popular readership seen in Feng Menglong's appeal to the "common ear" 里耳,[1] aiming his work squarely at the wealthy, elite readers identified in Chapter Two and pulling the genre closer to the literati as a result. Ling's admission of literati authorship in the prefaces, set against the quintessential literati backdrop of the Imperial examinations, also contributed to this process of "literatization". As a further part of this process, his innovative use of the commentator role as a means to simulate a casual amateur storytelling gathering incorporated literati entertainment activities into vernacular fiction, which had previously been exclusively associated with the non-elite marketplace storytelling tradition. At the same time, Ling energetically added eroticism and simple, unsophisticated humour to his works to boost their entertainment value. In a sense, Ling Mengchu's reimagination of the genre created a lowbrow literature tailored for an elite readership. This contrasts with Feng Menglong's aim: an elevated literature for an imagined popular audience.

[1] Lütianguan zhuren, "Lütianguan zhuren xu", in Feng Menglong, *GJXS*, p.646.

Ling's reimagination of the genre to focus on functional effect and the audience also has implications for the assessment of the collections. As shown in Chapter One,[2] they are often regarded as inferior to the *Sanyan* collections when judged by the same standards. However, as the objectives of *Erpai* and *Sanyan* are fundamentally different, criticism of *Erpai* for not succeeding by the same criteria as *Sanyan* may be somewhat beside the point. A fairer assessment of the collections would perhaps be based on judging them on the success or failure of their functional effect on audiences rather than their intrinsic literary merit. While this is impossible to establish with respect to didacticism, their probable popularity[3] and timeless entertainment value (demonstrated by the way in which certain stories show an intuitive understanding of the workings of excitation-transfer theory) suggest that as entertainment they were very effective indeed.

While it is impossible to know the motivation behind Ling's reimagination of the *huaben*, several factors can be determined to be at play. First of all, the model established by Feng Menglong, disclaiming authorship and casting oneself as an editor of older works, was perhaps not credibly sustainable in the long run: as Ling Mengchu himself complains, Feng had collected all the Song and Yuan stories

[2] See p.86.
[3] See p.62

worthy of reprinting.[4] Even though the model of adapting literary language source materials into the vernacular was pioneered by Feng, Ling's frank admission of the process behind the creation of *Erpai* removed any need for pretence about the origins of the stories. By pulling the genre closer to the literati and creating an authorial figure, Ling was able to tap new sources for his stories, creating more space for the genre to develop and grow. A second factor, driving the increased focus on entertainment, could have been the commercial context surrounding the publication of the stories. Aware of the imperative to sell through his own competitive publishing activities, Ling focused on extracting as much entertainment value from the stories as possible through the incorporation of greater eroticism, humour, and suspense, even though these sometimes came at the expense of literary quality. Finally, the increased emphasis on didactic effectiveness may have sprung from the frustrations of long years of failure in the examination system coupled with an intense desire to have some beneficial influence on a declining dynasty. Realising the potential of the storyteller and commentator working in tandem in a ventriloquistic pairing, Ling developed and refined the didactic techniques seen in *Sanyan* to craft a didactic message of greater clarity and purpose, often speaking directly to the times in which he lived. Underlying the overriding emphasis on both entertainment and didacticism was Ling's belief that these two features were part of the fundamental character of

[4] Ling Mengchu, "Xu", *PAJQ*, *LMCQJ* v.2, p.1.

fiction. His obsession with the concept of "original colour" (*bense*) and faithful adherence to what he saw as established generic norms, evident through his drama criticism, made it inevitable that entertainment and didacticism would play a dominant role in his fiction.

Whatever the reasons behind it, Ling's reimagination of the *huaben* turned out to be a success. Not only were his own works widely read and anthologised, the boom in *huaben* writing of the late Ming and early Qing only really got going after *Erpai* was published. Whereas there are no recorded *huaben* collections other than *Sanyan* over the 7 years between 1620 and 1627, *Erpai*'s publication in 1628 heralded the start of a wave of new collections, including *Guzhang juechen* (c.1630), *Xingshi yan* (1632), *Huanxi yuanjia* (1640), and other works that can be dated to the Chongzhen reign period and the Ming-Qing transition, such as *Bian er chai* 弁而釵 (Hat and Hairpin), *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 (The Second West Lake Collection), *Yuanyang zhen* 鴛鴦針 (The Mandarin Duck Pin), *Bi xiezhi* 筆獬豸 (The Brush That Serves as Judgement Goat), *Qingye zhong* 清夜鐘 (Alarm Bell on a Silent Night), and *Zuixing shi* 醉醒石 (The Sobering Stone). While it is impossible to demonstrate a cause and effect relationship, it is certainly possible that Ling's reconception of the genre as one in which it was possible for the literatus to overtly adapt and create, rather than merely edit previous works, played a part in paving the way for the appearance of these works in the same

way that Feng's collections paved the way for Ling to start writing. Certainly, it is possible to see the influence of Ling's reimagination of *huaben* fiction as a genre focused on functional effect in subsequent collections. This focus led to the genre becoming split along functional lines between, in Hanan's terms, "erotic and romantic" works and "moral and heroic" works.[5]

One of the "moral and heroic" collections is *Xingshi yan*. Though the debt owed to *Sanyan* is evident from both its title and its use of the device of paired stories, seen in *Sanyan* but not *Erpai*, other features of the work show that it was led by functional effect. The first half of the collection is devoted to depictions of exemplary characters, while the second half is taken up with cautionary tales.[6] That the organization of the collection was determined by moralistic content clearly demonstrates the overriding importance of didacticism to the stories. Similarly, *Qingye zhong*, with its depictions of loyal ministers and events from the fall of the Ming, shows the influence of *Erpai*'s functional focus and increased political discursion with a contemporary relevance. Meanwhile, the "erotic and romantic" works, such as *Huanxi yuanjia* and *Guzhang juechen* share with *Erpai* a readiness to exploit the entertaining power of the erotic. The prefaces of these collections are more

[5] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, p.161.
[6] Sibau, "Reading for the Moral: Exemplarity and Heroism in *Xingshi yan* (1632) and the 'Fiction of Moral Duty'", p.5, 19.

frank about stating the erotic content of the stories and its entertainment value than *Erpai* is,[7] suggesting that the focus on functional effect initiated by Ling only grew more pronounced after the publication of his collections.

The most important works in the genre after the publication of *Erpai* are those of Li Yu. Though Li Yu, with his obsession with novelty and originality,[8] arguably effected a reimagination of the genre of his own, his *huaben* fiction showed many similarities to Ling Mengchu's.[9] Most notably, he developed Ling's embrace of the storyteller role further, creating a persona even closer to the implied author than that found in *Erpai*.[10] He was also deeply concerned with the entertainment value of his works: he stated after one of his plays that "One man not laughing is my anxiety" 一夫不笑是吾憂,[11] and characterised all of his writings as an attempt to make the reader laugh.[12]

Among the profusion of *huaben* fiction works in the late Ming and early Qing, only Li Yu's collections came close to attaining the lasting success of *Sanyan* and *Erpai*. Perhaps this is partly down to another legacy of Ling's reimagination of the *huaben*: the use of textual roles to privilege entertainment value and didactic effect over

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[7] See p.283.
[8] Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story,* p.167.
[9] Ibid., p.171.
[10] Yang Shuhui, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story*, pp.13-18.
[11] Li Yu, *Fengzheng wu* 風箏誤, in *Li Yu quanji* v.4, p.203.
[12] Li Yu, "Yu Han Ziqu" 與韓子蘧, in *Li Yu quanji* v.1, p.219.

literary quality. While *Erpai* manages to maintain a satisfactory balance between the sometimes conflicting needs of entertainment, didacticism, and literary flair, later authors (other than Li Yu) were less successful in this tricky task. Possibly for this reason, the genre declined later in the Qing dynasty, with later works failing to reach the heights attained by the *Sanyan* and *Erpai* collections. Ling's reimagination of the *huaben* may have stimulated the explosive growth of the genre, but it also led to its ultimate decline.

Appendix I: List of Ling's Works

Below is a list of Ling Mengchu's works, ordered firstly by the approximate date of publication where known,[13] and secondly by alphabetical order. Lost works are marked with a *. The abbreviated source of the text of extant works, or records in the case of lost works, is listed in the final column. If the work is extant and included as a title in *Ling Mengchu quanji*, the volume number is given; for smaller works included in larger titles, a page reference is given. If the work is lost, a page reference is given to where the record of the work can be found.

The main primary sources of information on Ling's lost works are his tomb inscription, *juan* 2 of the Ling family tree, the *Huzhou fuzhi* 湖州府志 (同治) (Records of Huzhou Prefecture (Tongzhi Era)), the *Wucheng xianzhi (Guangxu)* 烏程縣志 (光緒) (Records of Wucheng County (Guangxu Era)) and the *Shengshe zhenzhi (Tongzhi)*晟舍鎮志 (同治) (Records of Shengshe Town (Tongzhi Era)). In addition to these, Xu Yongbin 徐永斌, Xu Jianzhong 許建中, and Zhao Hongjuan 趙紅娟 have carried out secondary studies evaluating the evidence presented in these resources.

[13] Dates are based on those given in the introductions to each work in *Ling Mengchu quanji* and Zhao Hongjuan 趙紅娟, *Paian jingqi: Ling Mengchu zhuan* 拍案驚奇：凌濛初傳, pp.275-279.

Extant Works

Title	Genre	Date (if known)	Collected in/recorded in
Hou Han shu zuan 後漢書纂	Abridged history	1606	*LMCQJ* v.9
Xi bie[14] 惜別	*Taoqu*	1607	*Nanyin san lai* 南音三籟, *LMCQJ* v.4, p.63-4.
Shang shi[15] 傷逝	*Taoqu*	1608	Ibid., p.50-1.
Yechuang duihua ci (Yechuang hua jiu)[16] 夜窗對話詞 (夜窗話舊)	*Taoqu*	1610	*LMCQJ* v.4
Huo ni gong (Qi gong)[17] 惑溺供 (七供)	*Gong ti* verse	~ 1610	Ibid.
Dongpo chanxi ji 東坡禪喜集	Edited anthology.	1621	*LMCQJ* v.8
Shi ni 詩逆	Scholarly work on *Shi jing*	1622	*LMCQJ* v.1
Shi jing 詩經	Edited volume.	Post- 1623	*LMCQJ* v.5

[14] Also appears in both *Wusao hebian* and *Taixia xinzou*. See Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 ed., *Wusao hebian* 吳騷合編 j.2, pp78b-80b; Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Taixia xinzou* 太霞新奏 j.6, pp7b-9b, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 v.1744, pp71-72.

[15] Also appears in both *Wusao hebian* and *Taixia xinzou.* See Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 ed., *Wusao hebian* 吳騷合編 j.2, pp59b-61b; Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Taixia xinzou* 太霞新奏 j.6, pp18a-20a, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 v.1744, pp77-78.

[16] This appears in Pan Zhiheng's *Genshi* as *Yechuang duihua ci* and in *Wusao hebian* as *Yechuang huajiu*. The version in *Genshi* lacks the introduction found in *Wusao hebian*. See Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆, *Genshi chao* 亙史抄, "Waiji" 外紀 j.2, pp9b-11b, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 v.193, pp.520-521.; Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 ed., *Wusao hebian* 吳騷合編 j.4, pp73a-76a. The version in the *Quanji* is taken from *Genshi*.

[17] Appears in *Genshi*. Pan Zhiheng changed the title from *Huo ni gong* to *Qi gong*. See Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆, *Genshi chao* 亙史抄, "Waiji" 外紀 j.2, pp8a-9b, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 v.193, p.520.

Nanyin san lai 南音三籟	Drama criticism	Pre-1626	*LMCQJ* v.4
Qiuran weng zhengben fu yuguo (Qiuran weng, Zhengben fu yuguo) 虯髯翁正本扶餘國 (虯髯翁、正本扶餘國)	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	*LMCQJ* v.4
Shi yingxiong Hongfu mang ze pei (Mang ze pei) [18] 識英雄紅拂莽擇配 (莽擇配)	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	*LMCQJ* v.4
Song Gongming nao yuanxiao 宋公明鬧元宵	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	*LMCQJ* v.4
Paian jingqi 拍案驚奇	Vernacular fiction	1627-8	*LMCQJ* v.2
Yan Shi yi (*Kongmen liang dizi yan Shi yi*) 言詩翼 （孔門兩弟子言詩翼）	Scholarly work on *Shi jing*.	1630	*LMCQJ* v.1
Shengmen chuan Shi dizhong 聖門傳詩嫡塚	Scholarly work on *Shi jing*.	1631	Ibid.
Erke paian jingqi 二刻拍案驚奇	Vernacular fiction	1632	*LMCQJ* v.3
You Zhushan fu[19] 遊杼山賦	*Fu*	1636	*LMCQJ* v.4
Dongpo shu zhuan 東坡書傳	Edited volume.	n.d.	LMCQJ v.8

[18] *Shi yingxiong Hongfu mang ze pei, Li Weigong mohu yinyuan,* and *Qiuran weng zhengben fu yuguo* are also considered as being a three-part work, *Bei Hongfu san zhuan* 北紅拂三傳 (Three tales of Hongfu in the Northern style).

[19] This was included in the Chongzhen Wucheng regional gazetteer. See Xu Shougang 徐守綱 ed., *Wucheng Xianzhi (Chongzhen)* 烏程縣志 (崇禎), pp.30a-36b, in *Riben cang Zhongguo hanjian difang zhi congkan* 日本藏中國罕見地方志叢刊, v.28, pp.481-484.

Fojing liangzhong 佛經兩種		Buddhist sutras.	n.d.	LMCQJ v.9
Consists of:				
	Yuan jue jing 圓覺經	Buddhist sutra.		
	Weimojie suoshuo jing 維摩詰所說經	Buddhist sutra.		
He ping xuan shi (Xuan shi) 合評選詩 (選詩)		Edited anthology.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.5
Li Changji geshi 李長吉歌詩		Edited volume.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.6
Meng Dongye shiji 孟東野詩集		Edited volume.	n.d.	Ibid.
Meng Haoran ji 孟浩然集		Edited volume.	n.d.	Ibid.
Pipa ji 琵琶記		Edited play.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.10
Shishuo xinyu guchui (Fen jiao Shishuo xinyu guchui) 世說新語鼓吹 (分校世說新語鼓吹)		Edited volume.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.7
Shuxin yi tong 書信一通		Letter.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.4
Su Changgong biao qi 蘇長公表啟		Edited volume.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.8
Su Laoquan wenji 蘇老泉文集		Edited volume.	n.d.	Ibid.
Tang shi guang xuan 唐詩廣選		Edited volume.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.5

Tao Wei he ji 陶韋合集		Edited anthology.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.6
Consists of:				
	Wei Suzhou ji 韋蘇州集	Edited volume.		
	Tao Jingjie ji 陶靖節集	Edited volume.		
Wang Mojie shiji 王摩詰詩集		Edited volume.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.5
Xixiang ji 西廂記		Edited play.	n.d.	*LMCQJ* v.10

Lost Works

*Guomen ji** 國門集*	Original poetry collection	Post-1623	*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 j.180, p.4880.
*Guomen yi ji** 國門乙集*	Original poetry collection	Post-1623	Ibid.
*Li Weigong mohu yinyuan (Mohu yinyuan)** 李衛公驀忽姻緣 (驀忽姻緣)*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳, *Yuanshantang Ming jupin* 遠山堂明劇品, p.156.
*Ni Zhengping huai ci mo tou (Ni Zhengping)** 禰正平懷刺莫投 (禰正平)*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳, *Yuanshantang Ming jupin* 遠山堂明劇品, p.171.

Su Buwei zao di bao chou (Xue di bao chou * 蘇不韋鑿地報仇（穴地報仇）*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Ibid., p.157.
*Liu Bolun zhishen duan jiu (Liu Bolun)** 劉伯倫指神斷酒（劉伯倫）*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳, *Yuanshantang Ming jupin* 遠山堂明劇品, p.171.
*Cui Yin gong cunzhuang taohua** 崔殷功村莊桃花*	*Zaju*: earlier verson of *Diandao yinyuan*	Pre-1626	Ibid., p.156.
*Diandao yinyuan** 顛倒姻緣*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Ibid., p.156.
*Shi Jilun chunyou jingu** 石季倫春遊金穀*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Qian Zeng 錢曾, *Qian Zunwang shugutang cangshu mulu* 錢遵王述古堂藏 書目錄 j.10, p.535.
*Wang Yishao xie jing huan e** 王逸少寫經換鵝*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Ibid.
*Wang Ziyou cheng xing kan zhu** 王子猷乘興看竹*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Ibid.
*Zhang Yuansou tiantanzhuang ji** 張園叟天壇莊記*	*Zaju*	Pre-1626	Ibid.
*Qiao he shanjin ji (Shanjin ji)** 喬合衫襟記 (衫襟記)*	*Chuanqi*	Pre-1626	Anon., *Chuanqi huikao biaomu* 傳奇彙考標目, p.275-6.
*He jian ji** 合劍記*	*Chuanqi*	Pre-1626	Ibid.
*Xue he ji** 雪荷記*	*Chuanqi*	Pre-1626	Ibid.

*Jiao kou shi ce** 剿寇十策*	Strategies	1643-4	Zheng Longcai 鄭龍采, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming" 別駕初成公墓誌銘, *LMCQJ* v.10, p.197.
*Dangshan kaige** 碭山凱歌*	Victory song	1643-4	Ibid., p.198.
*Yanzi lou gong yan** 燕子樓公讌*	Poetry	1643-4	Ibid.
*Bei shu qian hou fu** 北輸前後賦*	Original *fu*.	n.d.	Min Baoliang 閔寶梁 ed., *Shengshe zhen zhi (Tongzhi)* 晟舍鎮志(同治) j.6, p.13b, In *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* 鄉鎮志專輯 v.24, p.1095.
*Daishan ji** 戴山記*	Travelogue? Daishan is in Huzhou.	n.d.	Zheng Longcai 鄭龍采, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming" 別駕初成公墓誌銘, p.196.
*Daishan shi** 戴山詩	Poetry.	n.d.	Ibid.
*Dangzhi hou lu** 蕩櫛後錄*	Treatise on paper? "Dangzhi" 蕩櫛 is a type of fine paper.	n.d.	Zong Yuanhan 宗源瀚 and Zhou Xuejun 周學濬 ed., *Huzhou fuzhi (Tongzhi)* 湖州府志 (同治) j.59, p.27b, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 no.54 v.4, p.1131.
*Jijiangzhai shiwen** 鷄講齋詩文*	Collection of poetry and prose	n.d.	Ibid.
*Jue jiao juzi shu** 絕交舉子書	Renunciation of examination attempts.	n.d.	Zheng Longcai 鄭龍采, "Biejia Chucheng gong muzhiming" 別駕初成公墓誌銘, p.196.
*Nisi Shi-Han yitong buping** 倪思史漢異同補評*	Scholarly work.	n.d.	Zong Yuanhan 宗源瀚 and Zhou Xuejun 周學濬 ed., *Huzhou fuzhi (Tongzhi)* 湖州府志 (同治) j.59, p.27a, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 no.54 v.4, p.1131.

*Sibian du xian** 已編蠹涎*	-	n.d.	Ibid., p.27b.
*Shanding Song shi buyi** 刪定宋史補遺*	Scholarly historical work.	n.d.	Min Baoliang 閔寶梁 ed., *Shengshe zhen zhi (Tongzhi)*晟舍鎮志(同治) j.6, p.12b. In *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* 鄉鎮志專輯 v.24, p.1094.
*Shijing renwu kao** 詩經人物考*	Scholarly work on the *Shi jing*.	n.d.	Zong Yuanhan 宗源瀚 and Zhou Xuejun 周學濬 ed., *Huzhou fuzhi (Tongzhi)* 湖州府志 (同治) j.59, p.27a, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 no.54 v.4, p.1131.
*Shiliu guo chunqiu shanzheng** 十六國春秋刪正*	Scholarly work.	n.d.	Min Baoliang 閔寶梁 ed., *Shengshe zhen zhi (Tongzhi)*晟舍鎮志(同治) j.6, p.13a. In *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* 鄉鎮志專輯 v.24, p.1095.
*Su-Huang chidu** 蘇黃尺牘*	Collection of letters	n.d.	*Ling shi zongpu xuanlu* 凌氏宗譜選錄 j.2, *LMCQJ* v.10, p.79.
*Xuehai qinglan**[20] 學海清瀾*	Scholarly work.	n.d.	Min Baoliang 閔寶梁 ed., *Shengshe zhen zhi (Tongzhi)* 晟舍鎮志(同治) j.6, p.9a. In *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* 鄉鎮志專輯 v.24, p.1093.
*Yanzhu ou** 燕築謳*	-	n.d.	Zong Yuanhan 宗源瀚 and Zhou Xuejun 周學濬 ed., *Huzhou fuzhi (Tongzhi)* 湖州府志 (同治) j.59, p.27b, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 no.54 v.4, p.1131.

[20] This work was started by Ling Mengchu's father Ling Dizhi 凌迪知 (1529-1600) and completed by Ling Mengchu.

*Yingteng san zha** 嬴籐三劄*	-	n.d.	Ibid.
*Zhanguo ce gai (Guo ce gai)** 戰國策概 (國策概)*	Summary of *Zhanguo ce*.	n.d.	Min Baoliang 閔寶梁 ed., *Shengshe zhen zhi (Tongzhi)* 晟舍鎮志(同治) j.6, p.13a. In *Zhongguo difang zhi jicheng* 中國地方志集成, *Xiangzhen zhi zhuanji* 鄉鎮志專輯 v.24, p.1095.
*Zhupi xuan fu** 朱批選賦*	Annotated collection of *fu*.	n.d.	Ibid.
*Zhupi Guo Zhengyu xuan shi zhu** 朱批郭正域選詩注*	Annotated collection of *shi*.	n.d.	Ibid.
*Zuo zhuan he qing** 左傳合鯖*	Scholarly work on *Zuo zhuan*.	n.d.	Zong Yuanhan 宗源瀚 and Zhou Xuejun 周學濬 ed., *Huzhou fuzhi (Tongzhi)* 湖州府志 (同治) j.59, p.27a, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 no.54 v.4, p.1131.

Possible works:

*Qulü**[21] 曲律*	Drama theory.	n.d.	Zhuang Yifu 莊一拂 ed., *Gudian xiqu cunmu huikao* 古典戲曲存目彙考, p.492.

[21] This work is mentioned in *Gudian xiqu cunmu huikao* 古典戲曲存目彙考, but I can find no mention of it in other sources.

For more detail, see the following studies:

Xu Jianzhong 許建中. "Ling Mengchu xiqu cunmu kaobu" 淩濛初戲曲存目考補 (A further examination of records of Ling Mengchu's drama works). *Yangzhou shiyuan xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 1991 (2): 48-51.

Xu Yongbin 徐永斌. "Ling Mengchu zhu shukao" 凌濛初著述考 (A description and examination of Ling Mengchu's works). *Guji yanjiu* 46 (2004): 226-231.

Zhao Hongjuan 趙紅娟. "*Shengshe zhenzhi* zhong suojian Ling Mengchu ziliao kaobian, cunyi"《晨舍鎮志》中所見凌檬初資料考辯、 存疑 (Studies on and doubts about materials on Ling Mengchu found in the *Shengshe zhenzhi*). *Huzhou shifan xueyuan xuebao* 22 no.5 (October 2000): 41-45.

Appendix II: Wu vocabulary appearing in *Erpai*

Notes

This appendix contains a list of the occurrences of Wu vocabulary in *Erpai*. The occurrences were counted by searching a digital version of the text for the words identified by Xu Jingqian 徐靜茜 in her article "*Liangpai* suojian fangyan ciyu ji jushi" 《兩拍》所見方言詞語及句式. The makeweight *zaju* "Song Gongming nao yuanxiao" 宋公明鬧元宵雜劇 (Song Gongming Creates an Uproar on Lantern Festival Night) in *Erke* was not included in the search, and when counting the duplication of story 23 was taken into account. Moreover, the context of each occurrence was checked in order to confirm that the word was being used in its Wu sense.

The list produced by Xu Jingqian contains not only Wu words and phrases, but also words that have different meanings in northern vernacular and Wu, and words that have different registers in the two languages. The aim of this study and Xu Jingqian's differs, meaning that words that are characteristic of but not unique to Wu should be disregarded in order to avoid skewing the result. This led to the exclusion of the list of words with different registers, as well as certain other words. For example, the use of the character *de* 得 in the sense of "can" and as an equivalent of the aspect marker *le* 了 is not unique to the Wu language. This is attested to by the *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (Large Chinese Dictionary), which gives examples of these uses of *de* 得

from sources as diverse as *Lun yu* 論語 (The Analects), the writings of Fujian native Li Zhi (as "can"), and in *Xixiang ji zhugongdiao* 西廂記諸宮調 (*Zhugongdiao* of the Romance of the Western Chamber) (as an aspect marker).[22] Each word in the list was cross-checked with the *Hanyu da cidian*, looking for uses in works where the writer came from outside the Wu region and furthermore did not, as far as is known, take up an official post in the region. If any such works were found, the word was discounted. If there were any doubts, words were kept on the list. The list of words discounted and the reason why is also found in Appendix II. However, words that have a wider currency in modern Chinese were left on the list: the evolving nature of language means it is not possible to be sure that these had a wider currency in Ling's time. Moreover, the context of each occurrence was checked in order to confirm that the word was being used in its Wu sense.

[22] Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風 ed., *Hanyu da cidian suoyinben* 漢語大詞典縮印本 v.1, p.1861.

Occurrences of Wu words in *Pai'an jingqi*

Nouns/Pronouns	Occurrences
家主婆	5
男人家	4
阿哥	4
入舍女婿	1
過房兒子	1
晚老子	1
姑娘（姑母）	69
公公	26
後生家（年輕人）	5
盲子	6
郎中	4
大頭腦	2
乖人	2
拖油瓶	2
事體	118
家事（家產）	80
間壁	19
灶下	13
混堂	1
醬瓿	1
草篛	1
篦兒	4
划子船	1
混同鋪	1

面湯	3
扎鉤	1
作料	2
饞唾	1
戲文	7
肉裡錢	2
夜飯	15
羹飯	6
眾生	8
蜒蚰	1
百腳	1
開年	1
下晝	1
月生	1
好日	18
聲氣	5
記認	6
靠傍	3
鼻頭	3
名頭	9
話頭	12
灶頭	2
想頭	5
當頭	2
興頭	32
賊骨頭	1
紙糊頭	1

推頭	2
配頭	5
鬧頭	1
清頭	9
陣頭	1
這答	1
自家	229
別人家	21
Verbs	
掇（用雙手端）	25
搵（隨便塗）	1
袋（裝）	1
攛（插入）	8
研	1
話（說）	5
落 (代買東西從中私取錢)	3
躒	1
搡	1
累（滾）	1
撰 (賺）	1
回（轉賣）	1
扳	20
幫襯	49
退過	3
嫌鄙	3
厭憎	2
上心	9

作興	4
相幫	13
掇轉	6
做親	18
脫力	1
肉痛（心疼）	1
恨毒	4
記掛	9
發極	3
落得	82
轉來	91
轉去	8
築漏	1
耍子	9
覺道	5
蠻做	3
像意	41
無干	39
無心想	1
做人家	13
不過意	8
討彩頭	1
拔短梯	1
打中火	1
有清頭	1
沒清頭	2
攛出來	1

做手腳	6
做不得准	1
敲台拍凳	1
推來搶去	1
依心像意	2
像心稱意	1
Adjectives	
長（久）	4
晏	5
杜（土制）	1
纍堆	2
狼犺	4
標緻 ／標致	50
瑣小	1
齷齪	6
輕敲	3
推板	3
鬧熱	7
饞勞	1
滲瀨	4
倒灶	1
唧溜（狡黠）	1
溜撒（靈活）	5
脫空	6
老氣	2
正氣（正派）	9
熱落	2

出熱	1
落末	4
儘夠／盡勾	7
假撇清	3
生煞煞	2
不長進	7
縮縮肭肭	2
點點搐搐	1
一鼓一板	2
失張失志	3
歷碌	2
歷歷碌碌	1
天字一號	1
幹圓潔淨	1
夾七夾八	2
四不拗六	2
是長是短	15
醜頭怪臉	1
清清早起	1
匾匾的信伏	1
嗚哩嗚喇	3
嘓啅嘓啅	1
恨性命	1

Other	
煞（極）	33
元（仍）	3
偏生	6

一發	180
越加	24
重複	4
盡數	39
齊頭	1
只做	36
該應	2
不消	66
會得（會）	18
只有得（只會）	5
有得（有）	44
沒得（沒有）	25
不到得（不見得）	35
做道（也許）	24
價（地）	26
一頭。。。一頭	55
頭（件）	8
主（筆（錢））	12
阿也	5

Words That Have Different Meanings in Wu	
著（單用）	17*
淘氣（惹氣）	5
端正（準備）	7
大（粗)	1**
粗（大）	2
著意（稱心）	2

有數（有限）	5
過頭（出頭）	1
好（可以，應該）	170***
歇（睡）	19
只管（老是）	28
落後（最後）	7
說話（名)	218
生活（活兒）	7
地頭（住處）	4
手腳（暗中採取的行動）	28
透（呼吸）	1
眠（平躺）	29
拌（糾纏）	2

Idioms and Phrases	
賒得不如現得	1
鶉鴿子旺邊飛	2
有天無日頭	1
吃殺饅頭當不得飯	1
不知還是井落在吊桶裡, 吊桶落在井裡	1
急驚風撞著了慢郎中	1
慢槽搖船捉醉魚	2
心肝不托著五臟	1
張公吃酒李公醉, 拿著黃牛便當馬	1
挑得籃裡便是菜	1
好似熱地上蜒蚰, 一歇兒立腳不定	1
身子象墩盘上蚂蚁, 一霎也站腳不住	1
一點甜糖抹在鼻頭上, 只聞得香卻舔不著。	1

Total Occurrences of Wu Words	**2668**
Total Characters	**5401**

*This figure is an estimate. There are 3366 total uses of this character. Of 100 instances in *Chuke,* one was used in this sense. Of 100 instances in *Erke*, none were used in this sense.

**This figure is an estimate. There are 2930 total uses of this character. Of 100 instances in *Chuke* and 100 instances in *Erke*, none were used in this sense.

***This figure is an estimate. There are 2837 total uses of this character. Of 100 instances in *Chuke*, 5 were used in this sense. Of 100 instances in *Erke*, 7 were used in this sense.

WORD	REASON FOR REMOVAL
娘子	《北夢瑣言》、《聊齋志異·邵女》
老公	元 楊顯之《酷寒亭》
鄰舍	唐 元稹《競舟》詩
嬤嬤	元 武漢臣《生金閣》
物事	清 孔尚任《桃花扇·訪翠》
舊年	唐 张说《苏摩遮》诗
跟腳	元 鄭光祖《王粲登樓》
牽頭	元 王實甫《西廂記》
望頭	元 武漢臣《老生兒》
老實頭	老舍《赵子曰》第十一
利市	宋 孙光憲《北夢瑣言》
齊整	元 白朴《東牆記》
各別（不同）	元 李壽卿《伍員吹簫》
老蒼	唐 杜甫《壯游》
得（能）	《论语·微子》
得（了）	晉 董解元《西廂記諸宮調》
道（認為）	唐 封演《封氏聞見記·月桂子》

SENTENCE PATTERN	OCCURRENCES
「VOC」式	312*
「VO 過」	3**
「V 快」式	3
「V 得（不）來」式	67

*This is an estimate, based on the average number of appearances in the stories examined x 78

** No examples were found in the stories examined. The 3 instances here were all listed by Xu Jingqian.

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